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Voices of Change: A Case Study Documenting the Development of an Organization and Its Culture

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VOICES OF CHANGE: A CASE STUDY DOCUMENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN
ORGANIZATION AND ITS CULTURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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May 2015

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Many great contributions have been made to the scholarly literature related to the field of organizational change. Though these contributions provide significant breadth and depth of knowledge, absent is the proverbial road map created by organizations that have successfully developed, led, and assessed the progress of significant organizational change. To create this map, this study examined a change initiative that resulted in the development of both an organization and its culture. That journey, spanning more than sixty years, was brought to life through the narratives of those present during the period of change.

Emerging from their collective voices are the purposeful organizational strategies, attitudes and beliefs, and characteristics inherent to this organization's culture. When these findings are aligned with the existing body of literature, twelve human qualities become visible. It is these qualities that illuminate the pathway an organization must traverse when leading significant change. Where many theories typically separate and associate these human characteristics with smaller elements of organizational change, the findings of this study have placed them within their rightful position on center stage.

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DEDICATION

To my Grandparents: Milan, Rose, Thomas and Veronica

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem	2
Purpose of Study	2
Research Questions	3
Theoretical Framework	3
Significance	6
Definition of Terms	7
Chapter Summary	10
II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	12
Introduction	12
Leadership Development and the Performing Arts	13
Storytelling: The Voices of Change	15
Essence of Storytelling	15
Preservation of Culture	16
Institutional Knowledge and Sensemaking	17
Forefront of Change	18
Foundations of Systems Theory	19
Reactive Versus Responsive Systems	20
Limits to Growth Archetypes	23
The Challenge of Initiating	24
The Challenge of Sustaining	25
The Challenge of Reorganizing	27
The Learning Organization	28
Learning Organizations and Leading Change	29
Senge’s and Garvin’s Learning Organization	31
Theories of Organizational Change	36
Peter Senge’s Catalyst for Change	36
James Kotter’s Eight Steps to Anchoring Change	42
Hall and Hord’s Concerns Based Adoption Model	46
Lewin’s Three Stages of Organizational Change	50
Chapter Summary	52

Chapter	Page
III	METHODOLOGY53
	Purpose of Study53
	Research Design.....53
	Research Questions.....55
	Researcher Bias.....55
	Sample Size and Selection.....56
	Validity and Reliability.....57
	Pilot Study.....59
	Data Collection60
	Analysis of Data.....63
	Chapter Summary64
IV	ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS65
	Prologue: The Soup Was Boiling66
	The Learning Organization71
	Vignette I: Soul73
	Vignette II: Authenticity75
	Summation of the Learning Organization.....76
	Establish Meaning, Management and Measurement77
	Vignette III: Vision78
	Vignette IV: Organic.....80
	Vignette V: Growth.....81
	Summation of Meaning, Management and Measurement82
	Surfacing Organizational Strategies82
	Vignette VI: Humanity83
	Vignette VII: Relationships85
	Vignette VIII: Diversity86
	Summation of Organizational Strategies87
	Illuminating Attitudes and Beliefs88
	Vignette IX: Passion88
	Vignette X: Grit90
	Vignette XI: Appreciation.....92
	Vignette: XII: Humility.....93
	Summation of Attitudes and Beliefs94
	Chapter Summary94

Chapter	Page
V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	95
Introduction.....	95
Answering the Research Questions	95
Research Question 1: Learning Organization	95
Discussion.....	95
Links to Theory.....	96
Research Question 2: Meaning, Management, Measurement	99
Discussion.....	100
Links to Theory.....	101
Research Question 3: Organizational Strategies.....	103
Discussion.....	103
Links to Theory.....	104
Research Question 4: Attitudes and Beliefs.....	106
Discussion.....	106
Links to Theory.....	107
Summary of the Study	111
Recommendations for Future Research	112
REFERENCES	114
APPENDICES	123
Appendix A-Letter of Participation	123
Appendix B-Informed Consent.....	124
Appendix C-Faculty Interview Protocol.....	126
Appendix D-Student Interview Protocol	127
Appendix E-Administrator Interview Protocol.....	128
Appendix F-Community Member Interview Protocol.....	129
Appendix G-Alumni Interview Protocol	130
Appendix H-Research and Interview Questions Alignment.....	131
Appendix I-The Road Map for Organizational Change	132

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Proposed Alignment of Garvin's and Senge's Characteristics of Learning Organizations	33

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Performing Arts programs that encompass genres such as Theatre, Dance, and Cinema & Digital Arts have gained increased attention within academia over the last 50 years (Byrnes, 2009). Today, many institutions of higher education have either fully developed conservatories of performing arts or offer these programs on a smaller scale. Many of these programs are frequently viewed through the lens of their performances, projects, and accolades they receive rather than the organizational culture that created those memorable moments. When the lights are turned down, the curtains are drawn, and the audience is shuffling out of the theatre, the focus returns once again to the pedagogy and academic rigor inherent to many of the leading performing arts programs. It is an emphasis that never dissipates completely, even during a performance. It is a culture defined by a continued pursuit of excellence, which has propelled the top performing arts programs to the levels of recognition they have attained.

The Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University was established with many of the same ideals in focus. Emerging from its roots as a business training college in the late 1960's, Point Park ambitiously sought to become the center of cultural leadership within its region. Affiliations with notable organizations such as the Pittsburgh Playhouse and the Civic Light Opera contributed to the evolution of the university's student dance company into the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (Point Park College, 1985). Sixty years later, the Conservatory plays an integral role in more than 18 major productions and over 230 performances annually.

Similar to the beginnings of many widely recognized organizations, the Conservatory at Point Park University set out upon an ambitious journey in pursuit of a strategic vision. This journey, spanning more than sixty years, encompassed the development of an organization and its culture. Responsible for this growth are the many faculty, administrators, students, and

members of the extended university community within the region and beyond. What began as a shared vision between several individuals developed into the foundation for an organization positioned to achieve the very vision it had established more than a half century ago.

Statement of the Problem

Many notable theorists have contributed an immense amount of scholarly literature to the field of organizational change. Though these contributions have been great, missing from this body of knowledge is the proverbial road map created by organizations that have developed, led, and assessed the progress of a significant change initiative. This resource would illuminate the benchmarks and characteristics organizations should pursue to further enhance their likelihood of success. Therefore, the opportunity to document the journey of an organization that has successfully undertaken a significant change initiative, from the perspective of those directly involved, should be captured. The journey taken by the Conservatory of Performing Arts presents that opportunity.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to document a significant change initiative that resulted in the development of an organization and its culture. That journey, spanning greater than sixty years, is brought to life through the narratives of those present during the period of change. The purposeful strategies, attitudes and beliefs, and characteristics of members of the organization discovered within the narratives are then aligned with existing theories related to organizational change. Emerging from these efforts is a map that organizations can reference to further enhance the likelihood of success when leading significant change initiatives.

Research Questions

The research questions posed by this study converge on the period of time during which the Conservatory of Performing Arts experienced significant growth as an organization.

Consequently, the following questions are addressed by this study:

1. Is the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University a learning organization?
If so, what evidence supports this assertion?
2. How did the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University infuse meaning, management, and measurement within its culture?
3. What organizational strategies enable the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?
4. What attitudes and/or beliefs enable members the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?

Theoretical Framework

This study documents a significant change initiative that resulted in the development of an organization and its culture. Therefore, a theoretical framework that encompasses organizational change, storytelling, and leadership are essential components to this study.

Organizational Change

Rarely does an organization have the opportunity to exist within a static environment. In fact, the time tested adage reminds us that one of the few assurances is change itself. In response to this reality, organizations that are positioned to effectively manage the challenges associated with change have the opportunity to leverage its potential. This can be accomplished by embracing the characteristics of a learning organization and the successful application of change theory to the culture of the organization.

Whether change is strategically designed or in reaction to an external force, organizations that have undertaken a significant change initiative will be more likely to achieve success when they invest in their capacity to learn (Senge, 1999; Garvin, 2000). This emphasis is opposite of what typically occurs within many organizations. Traditionally, the focus is centered upon extrinsic factors that are identified as the cause for the intended change. Examples of this might be recent trends in the industry requiring a shift in trajectory or a new initiative being introduced by senior leadership. In either case, the resulting energy driving the required change of behavior originates outside of the individual.

Organizations that embody the characteristics of a learning organization approach change with a different philosophy. For these organizations, change is driven by the realization of learning opportunities. This newly acquired knowledge is then directly reinvested within the organization's community. Peter Senge (1999) captured the essence of this paradigm when he theorized that learning organizations are "continually expanding [their] capacity to create [their] future" while engaging in "learning that enhances [their] capacity to create" (p. 14). Furthermore, these organizations have infused an emphasis upon developing *meaning*, *management*, and *measurement* within their cultures. It is only through establishing a widely accepted vision (meaning) for the organization that clear guidelines for action (management) and tools for assessing progress (measurement) can be developed. Without this foundation, an organization will ultimately be unable to modify its behavior to mirror newly acquired knowledge or insight (Garvin, 2000). With these core characteristics of a learning organization providing the scaffolding for the organization's culture, the integration of theory to support a change initiative can occur with greater efficiency.

The change theories posited by Peter Senge and James Kotter support the correlation between the characteristics of a learning organization and leading successful change. In addition, they each acknowledge that organizational change is also subject to many counterbalancing forces (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012; Senge, 1999). Though the initial momentum of a change initiative is significant, over a period of time challenges will inevitably arise that impede progress. For many organizations these limits to growth will become insurmountable. Organizations that have successfully identified and addressed these challenges have done so by investing in the creative capacity of their employees.

Similar to that of Senge and Kotter, Gene Hall and Shirley Hord theorized that successful change is inextricably linked to the capacity of the organization's community. Rather than fostering the characteristics of the existing culture, they believe organizational change can be advanced through an effective understanding of the attitudes and beliefs of those impacted by the change initiative. Through an understanding of variables associated with change such as existing perceptions and the rate of adoption, adjustments can be made by those facilitating change to ensure momentum is maintained (Hall & Hord, 1987).

Kurt Lewin's theory of organizational change also supports the assertion that successful change is linked to the organization's community. However, unlike the previous theories, Lewin focuses intently upon managing the cognitive aspect of change. His theory takes advantage of the disruptive nature of change in hopes that the resulting behavior will ultimately align with the desired vision of the future. Though the focus remains upon the individual, this theory is underpinned by a more typical command and control approach to managing change (Lewin, 1974; Schein, 1999a).

Storytelling

As the previously described theories are each focused upon an element within an organization's community, it becomes relevant to embrace the role of storytelling in understanding change. For ages humankind has used the spoken word to communicate ideas, preserve cultures, and make sense of the world around us. For organizations that have undergone a significant change initiative, these narratives become the artifacts of that journey. Through enabling the voice of those present during the change initiative, an organic understanding of the existing attitudes, beliefs, and motivation of the organization's community is brought to life.

Leadership

As this study is focused upon examining change within organizations, there appears to be a unique phenomenon occurring within performing arts organizations worthy of consideration. Though these organizations are not directly focused upon developing leadership qualities, they do instill a willingness and courage among members of their community to lead where there is no defined path towards a shared vision (Abfalter, 2013; Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013; Peterson & Williams, 2004). Further exploration of this idea will emerge as the stories of those involved in the conservatory's growth are collected.

Significance

The formative years within the Conservatory at Point Park College were eagerly embraced despite the many challenges they faced. William Stark, a trustee, referring to then president Arthur Blum, captured the essence of this period of time when he stated "We basically dreamt some of his impossible dreams ... and I would encourage him because I believed that if part of them came to fruition, this town would be improved" (Point Park College, 1985, p. 61). The dreaming of impossible dreams provides an early glimpse into the beginnings of both an

organization and its culture. More importantly, it provides evidence that from the beginning this organization had been acutely aware of an opportunity to create something unique.

Where many change initiatives within organizations seem to occur on the surface, leaders within the university community understood that lasting change must be deeply rooted within the core values and beliefs of an organization (Morgan, 1989). This idea can best be visualized through Peter Senge's model of Personal Mastery. More specifically, it is an individual's interpretation of the role creative tension plays in defining and achieving one's personal vision. Senge theorized that a rubber band stretched between our hands symbolizes the creative tension between our visions and current reality. Typically, one of two things occurs. The tension is relieved by either lowering the vision to become aligned with our existing reality or improving upon our current reality to become aligned with our vision (Senge, 2006).

During the course of a change initiative, many organizations will frequently lower their vision by reaching for what is attainable in the short term. In doing so, they will ultimately diminish the vision and subsequently the intrinsic motivation to achieve it. Conversely, fewer are those organizations that establish a culture that embraces the pursuit of a vision without lowering their expectations. Performing arts organizations appear to embody this characteristic. Therefore, the opportunity to document a significant organizational change initiative, the development of the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University, presents an opportunity to experience firsthand the voices of change.

Definition of Terms

Throughout the study, the following definitions apply:

Academic Rigor: For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the level and variety of techniques required of students enrolled within the Theatre and Dance programs.

Appreciation: An ability to understand the worth, quality, or importance of something; an ability to appreciate something (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Authenticity: Real or genuine, not copied or false (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Cinema Department: One of three departments within the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University which focuses upon techniques in cinema, screenwriting, and digital arts.

Community of Practice: A Community of Practice is defined as “Groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise ... who share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 139).

Conservatory: Merriam Webster defines a conservatory as a school which specializes in teaching one or more of the fine arts.

Conservatory of Performing Arts: One of the four academic divisions at Point Park University. The conservatory consists of the departments of theatre, dance, and cinema.

Dance Department: One of three departments within the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University which focuses upon techniques in ballet, jazz, modern, and dance pedagogy.

Diversity: “The quality or state of having many different forms, types, ideas etc...; the state of having people who are different races or who have different cultures in a group or organization” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Growth: The process of growing, progressive development (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Grit: Mental toughness and courage (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Humanity: The quality or state of being human (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Humility: The quality or state of not thinking you are better than other people; the quality or state of being humble (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Learning Organization: Peter Senge theorized that a learning organization is "... an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future." He further states that these organizations continue to engage in "learning that enhances our capacity to create" (Senge, 1999, p. 14).

Loose Coupling: Events within a system are responsive to each other, however, each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness (Weick, 1976).

Organic: Forming an integral element of the whole (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Passion: A strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre: Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre (PBT) was founded in 1969 as an affiliate of Point Park College under the direction of Artistic Director Nicholas Petrov and Board Chair Loti Falk (<http://www.pbt.org>).

Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera: A nonprofit professional theatre company based in the cultural district of downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The opera is dedicated to the preservation, creation, and promotion of live musical theatre (<http://www.pittsburghclo.org>).

Pittsburgh Playhouse: The performing arts center acquired by the university in 1968 to showcase professional working artists as well as university talent. The building incorporates three fully functional theatres staffed by the university's Professional Theatre company, the Conservatory's Theatre Company, and the Conservatory's Dance Company. The Playhouse also hosts the

nation's second oldest continually running children's theatre, Playhouse Jr.

(<http://pittsburghplayhouse.org>).

Relationships: The way in which two or more people are connected (Merriam-Webster, n.d).

Soul: The ability of a person to feel kindness and sympathy for others, to appreciate beauty and art (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Systems Archetype: A system archetype is a model of organizational behavior that makes visible the relationships between existing elements within the organization (Senge, 1994, p. 121).

Systems Thinking: Peter Senge defines systems thinking as “A body of methods, tools, and principles, all oriented to looking at the interrelatedness of forces, and seeing them as part of a common process” (Senge, 1994, p. 89).

Theatre Department: One of three departments within the Conservatory of Performing Arts which focuses upon teaching acting, musical theatre, stage management, technical theatre design, and the applied arts.

Vision: Something that you imagine, a picture that you see in your mind (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Chapter Summary

The Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University emerged from a vision of energizing the cultural arts experience within the city of Pittsburgh. Similar to other organizations, the Conservatory undertook a significant journey that resulted in the development of a culture that closely resembles what is in existence today. Through the collection of first person accounts of that period of time, the opportunity exists to align those narratives with scholarly research relating to organization change. It is anticipated that emerging from this exploration will be the development of further insight into what distinguishes some

organizational cultures as highly capable leaders of change. The review of literature continues this investigation by focusing upon the existing body of scholarly research relating to this topic.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In effort to make visible the journey the Conservatory of Performing Arts took in pursuit of their organizational vision, this review of literature sought to examine several bodies of scholarly work. The greatest volume of evidence is directly related to organizational change and was specifically selected due to its alignment with learning organizations and the characteristics embodied by organizations with similar cultures. Though they do collectively share comparable characteristics, their uniqueness becomes evident when evaluating the linear and non-linear patterns inherent to these theories. The review also navigates through an abbreviated exploration of systems theory. More specifically, it details the idea that systems can in fact be described as either reactive or responsive while functioning as a catalyst for change. Together, these components become essential to the mapping of an organization's journey through a significant change initiative.

As with any journey, this would not have been able to be accomplished without a guide. For the purposes of this study, the voices of those present with the Conservatory throughout its development take on this important role. Therefore, it was relevant to explore the essence of storytelling and the value it contributes to both leadership and the development of sustainable change within organizations. With the stepping stones in place to identify the beginning of the pathway, our journey begins with a question. Why do some individuals and organizations exhibit such willingness and courage to lead where there is no clear path towards a desired vision?

Leadership Development and the Performing Arts

Howard Gardner (1995) stated, “The key to leadership, as well as to the garnering of a following, is the effective communication of a story” (p. 62). In essence, effective leaders must be able to passionately convey a vision that ignites an organization’s desire to identify with and move towards a common purpose. Though existing research does acknowledge a correlation between leadership development and the characteristics espoused by the performing arts community, an underlying interest within this study is that of a lesser-explored phenomenon (Abfalter, 2013; Baker, 2008; Kaddar, 2009; Little, 2005; Peterson & Williams, 2004; Rhine, 2006). The role of performing arts programs in leadership development is not solely focused upon refining natural leadership qualities, yet, it is about developing a willingness to learn to lead where there is no path and having the courage to do so (Peterson & Williams, 2004).

Accepting the belief that leadership is a key component to managing change within organizations, why then do the performing arts appear to be a natural incubator for the development of the willingness and courage to lead? Research posits that the performing arts encourage the development of persistence, empathy, teamwork, and most importantly critical thinking (Nathan, 2012). As the complexity of our organizations continues to evolve, these leadership skills become a necessary requirement to not only plan for but implement sustainable change. Daniel Pink (2009) reaffirmed this idea when speaking to a leader’s ability to motivate an organization’s community toward a common purpose. He believes that effective leadership has:

The ability to create artistic and emotional beauty, to detect patterns and opportunities, to craft a satisfying narrative and to combine seemingly unrelated ideas into a novel invention [as well as] the ability to empathize, to understand the

subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in oneself and to elicit it in others, and to stretch beyond the quotidian, in purpose and meaning. (p. 51)

The natural focus upon both the cognitive and affective domains of learning that is encountered within performing arts organizations creates a unique learning environment. Individuals not only self-assess personal attitudes, motivations, and communications styles (affective domain), they are immersed in opportunities to develop understanding through the exploration and sharing of varied perceptions and interpretations (cognitive domain). One could argue that this environment appears to accelerate the development of characteristics of leadership, while within other organizational cultures these same characteristics develop at a more moderate pace.

Recent examples from both a corporate culture as well as higher education reaffirm the practice of turning to the performing arts to provide leadership development. Many of these programs focus upon effective communication techniques and the ability to engage members within an organization's community. Martha Burgess, cofounder of Theatre Techniques for Executives, believes that "... leaders need coaching in how to maximize their effectiveness in front of an audience" (Little, 2005, p. 8). The workshops created by her organization exposes executives to techniques such as infusing energy into their actions, learning how to interact more effectively with their audience, and most importantly how to deliver critical messages that reach the intended audience. Similarly, the University of Michigan has developed an educational theatre program that provides professional development opportunities for members within the university community. Since its development, The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (CRLT) has found that participants engaged more openly with relevant issues that are strategically embedded within the sketches. Since its inception, their programs have enabled the

university to develop awareness for change initiatives, helped devise and change patterns of behavior, but most importantly their efforts have contributed to many sustainable change initiatives (Kaplan, Cook, & Steiger, 2006).

As a correlation has been identified between performing arts organizations and the development of leadership characteristics, this study, in part, intends to further the exploration of this phenomenon. This will be accomplished by addressing the leadership characteristics of courage and voice in the form of two questions. First, are members of the performing arts organizations more willing to accept leadership roles? Second, where is the source of courage derived from that enables them to accept the reins of responsibility? It is through an understanding of these aspects of leadership that a more complete picture of this relationship can be understood. This insight will be captured by listening to the stories of the lived experiences of those who made the journey alongside the Conservatory.

Storytelling: The Voices of Change

Essence of Storytelling

Since time immemorial, humankind has incorporated the use of storytelling to preserve cultures, expand religious following, and influence pivotal moments in history. It is an inherent skill that all humans have the capacity to develop and master. In essence, storytelling is a part of our world. Therefore, the value of our collective experience becomes significant to those seeking to advance scholarly knowledge related to organizational change and culture. So much so, it has been said that organizations and their respective culture are talked into existence (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Though somewhat simplified, this idea posited by Weick seems to encapsulate the foundational knowledge developed by scholars such as Boje, Prusak, Snowden, and Denning. Storytelling has the ability to develop motivation, enhance understanding amidst

complexity, and cultivate organizational culture. These characteristics have the power to connect an organization's past with the present, while serving as a springboard towards the future (Denning, 2011). If one wants to truly understand an organization and its culture, it is important to begin by listening to the stories of those who were present during the pivotal moments of the journey.

Preservation of Culture

Though traditionalists will argue that quantitative data has the ability to diminish speculation with concise facts, a well-constructed narrative is equally as compelling when attempting to develop an understanding of an organization and its culture. When genuinely explored, storytelling not only introduces a sense of empathy concerning the experiences of an individual, it also reveals valuable insight relating to existing norms, values, and identity in ways that numbers cannot (Barker & Gower, 2010; Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001). Boje (2008) has explored this concept quite thoroughly within his scholarly work related to storytelling organizations. He believes storytelling encourages interaction amongst individuals which infuse new perspectives into the existing culture while continually revising those that already exist. As culture emerges from the process and product of these interactions, it remains inextricably linked to each member of the organization. This is one of the reasons why the prevailing myth that organizational culture can be established and cultivated by only members of a singular group remains untrue. No one person or team is that omnipotent. Every member of an organization by virtue of their daily interaction contributes to the development and sustainability of the existing culture (Keyton, 2005). In the end, their stories become the artifacts through which culture is expressed, circulated, and preserved.

Institutional Knowledge and Sensemaking

Storytelling not only contributes to the persistence of organizational culture, it also serves as a conduit by which knowledge is shared amongst practitioners. Where analytical approaches may only provide fragments of reality, organizational knowledge shared through narratives offers both a reflection and elaboration of knowledge and understanding of existing reality (Swap et al., 2001). Furthermore, stories serve as the foundation upon which institutional memory is constructed. This phenomenon has been explained by Boje (1991) as “bits and pieces of organizational experience recounted socially throughout the firm that formulate recognizable, cogent, defensible, and seemingly rational collective accounts that serve as precedents for individual assumptions, decisions, and action” (p. 106). It is this organic and self-sustaining process of knitting together emerging themes and patterns through narratives that members of the organization make sense of an existing culture and begin to construct what is collectively known as *institutional knowledge* (Snowden, 1999; Yang, 2013).

Research related to cognitive science has shown narratives to be more engaging and memorable because it is the story of a lived experience. Their value resides not within the demonstration of understanding, but how that understanding is applied to a particular event (Brady & Haley, 2013; Sole & Wilson, 1999; Swap et al, 2001). As humans, we are not passively participating in these narratives; in fact, we are highly active thinkers (Denning, 2005). As a result of this characteristic, Snowden (1999) theorized that if one were to ask members of an organization’s community about a particular event, they would likely respond with information they believe they should know. This surfacing of explicit knowledge has remained pervasive within the culture of many organizations. This phenomenon has been attributed to the reliance upon linear processes and procedures structured by mission statements, strategy, and statistics as a mechanism to manage organizational knowledge. To uncover the more valuable

tacit knowledge, researchers need to pursue the discovery of lessons, observations, and perceptions of individuals. One of the more prominent methods used to accomplish this is through the use of storytelling. Scholars have defined this approach to exploring culture and memory with terms such as *collective memory* and *organizational storytelling* (Denning, 2005; Snowden, 1999). Pursuit of this avenue of inquiry will reveal, from the perspective of the individual, the purposeful decisions, observations, and lessons learned during the course of their journey.

Forefront of Change

As humans, we instinctively respond to narratives in a deep, sometimes unconscious way. In fact, we actually answer with our attention where other methods of initiating change more frequently fail to garner such a response (Baum, 2000). Stephen Denning (2004) reaffirmed this idea when he stated “analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart ... that is where you must go if you are to motivate people not only to take action but to do so with energy and enthusiasm” (p. 123).

A recent study that examined the influential factors present during a major organizational change initiative concluded that there is a high correlation between storytelling and the achievement of the change objectives. Though it was noted that storytelling was not the only factor, removing it from the group of variables did significantly lower the likelihood of success (Denning, 2005). If utilized effectively, storytelling as a form of persuasive communication inherently accounts for personal, interpersonal, as well as the larger organizational perspectives (Barker & Gower, 2010).

In addition to encompassing multiple perspectives, the use of storytelling introduces several distinct advantages when integrated within change initiatives. Most notably, storytelling

is potentially more persuasive than directives rooted within quantitative data (Yang, 2013). A well-crafted narrative has the ability to move an organization from their current reality to where they envision themselves simply by embracing an authentic image of the future (Denning, 2011). It has also been theorized that the time to acceptance is significantly reduced as members of the organization are able to more efficiently process new beliefs or patterns of behavior more rapidly. As a result of this accelerated rate of adoption, swifter reactions to both internal and external challenges and opportunities can be experienced (Barker & Gower, 2010). Lastly, storytelling ensures that existing competencies and commitments are expressed by not only individuals leading the change but amongst members of the larger organizational community. This focused form of communication essentially creates an infrastructure that places importance upon the characteristics of trust and commitment through the incorporation of organizational narratives. Not only is information absorbed more rapidly, there is a significant emphasis placed upon the social relationships within the organization that are tied to a collective vision of the future (Brady & Haley, 2013).

The stories of these lived experiences not only serve an essential role within organizational culture, they also embody one of the core principles upon which systems theory is founded. Just as a culture is comprised of multiple points of view, systems theory focuses the perspective upon the entirety before further exploration of individual facets of an event or phenomenon. This concept emerges as a significant component when attempting to develop an understanding of organizational culture and change.

Foundations of Systems Theory

As the body of scholarly work related to systems theory is expansive, it is necessary to review several key concepts relevant to this study. Beginning with the idea of causality, systems theory is centered upon the belief that to understand something, one needs to observe it in its

entirety in order to comprehend its components. Though this concept is evident within both leadership and storytelling theory, the value contributed to this study is a discussion centered upon the difference between reactive and responsive systems. This exploration of causality allows for the development of an understanding of why one particular systems archetype, the limits to growth archetype, aligns with the collective body of evidence presented within this study. Once understanding of these two key concepts is established, the characteristics of a learning organization become both evident and relevant to the examination of a significant change initiative.

Reactive Versus Responsive Systems

As stated earlier, one of the advantages of systems theory is that it dissolves the tendency to view phenomena in a linear format. This perspective diminishes the idea that organizational change is based upon a sequence of planned events and replaces it with the concept of mutual causality (Morgan, 1997). Causality, in the larger sense, is defined as the flow of influence between phenomena and the affect each has upon the other. Therefore, mutual causality implies a reciprocal relationship in which influence is shared (Macy, 1991). The acceptance of this definition encourages one to think about change through the lens of a completely different paradigm. It is a paradigm that has been explored extensively throughout the work of notable systems theorists Peter Senge and Karl Weick.

Though the research of Senge and Weick generally align, they can be distinguished by differences in their viewpoints relating to causality within a system or organization. Senge believes in a more tightly connected and reactive system. This belief is expressed through the use of reinforcing and balancing feedback loops throughout much of his research. These reinforcing growth processes, as he has defined them, make visible the relationship between elements when a system is changed in some way. For example, when influence is exerted upon a given element,

the remaining elements react in accordance to the point of influence within the system. As long as there is an outside influence upon a particular element, Senge believes this reinforcing loop will continue to be amplified because of a reactive relationship. Counteracting these reinforcing loops are balancing feedback loops. The concept of a balancing loop is that it continues to seek stability by limiting change within a system. As a result, it will naturally oppose any outside influence, thereby creating balance within the system (Meadows, 2008; Senge 1999). This relationship signifies the major characteristics of a reactive system. As long as influence is applied, the resulting changes within the system or organization will continue to occur as each element reacts in turn directly to a connected point of influence.

Karl Weick, Professor Emeritus of Organizational Behavior and Psychology at the University of Michigan, theorized that elements within an organization are not as tightly linked as Senge has portrayed them to be. Weick's research surrounding the concept of loosely coupled systems has presented an alternative perspective to the more tightly coupled archetypes found within systems theory (Orton & Weick, 1990; Weick, 1976).

Weick (1976) defines his loosely coupled system as “a situation in which elements are responsive, but that each one preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness” (p. 3). He further theorized that both the location of an element within the hierarchy as well as relationships between individuals would inherit the characteristics of loose coupling (Weick, 1976). For example, a faculty member from a Humanities Department can be described as loosely coupled with the Vice President of Academic Affairs. They are connected through the hierarchy of the organizational structure, however, each exist within separate spheres of influence during the course of an academic year. The resulting relationship between these two entities is more responsive than reactive. Though each element is certainly affected by changes

within each other's sphere, or that of the larger organizational environment, the degree of independence removes the existence of a cause and effect relationship. Weick (1999) summarized this best when he stated "If there is both distinctiveness and responsiveness, the system is loosely coupled" (p. 205).

In addition to the existing relationship between elements, a loosely coupled system creates several additional distinct advantages. Most notably, the natural separateness of the elements provides for what Weick described as a 'sensing mechanism' within the organization. This characteristic provides each element the opportunity to become more responsive to both the internal and external environments of the organization. This sensitivity contributes directly to the advantage of being able to control the response in accordance with variations within the environment. In a more traditional reactive system, responses are found to be more systemic and applied to the larger organization. A more loosely coupled system will allow each element the opportunity to consider its response from the perspective of an isolated element as well as being part of the larger organization. The opportunity to consider a response also creates another advantage afforded to more loosely coupled systems. Due to the separateness of the elements, responses to changes within the environment may take on more adaptations. This locus of control experienced by individuals or teams throughout a loosely coupled organization contributes greatly to a sense of self-efficacy (Weick, 1976).

With an understanding of how elements respond to influences within a system, one can begin to visualize the strategies and points of influence needed to lead a sustainable change initiative. The starting point for this segment of the journey is a review of the limits to growth archetype. This paradigm will allow the visualization of an organization's journey to become evident.

Limits to Growth Archetype

System archetypes originated from a need for a more comprehensible tool that allowed managers to portray behavior exhibited within an organization while making visible the existing relationships between its many elements. What began with complex models that included detailed mathematical equations, ultimately evolved in the mid-1980s into a simpler, yet powerful way to convey relationships between elements of a system. These visual representations displayed the connectedness of the organization's culture and provided a tool that managers could use to construct valuable knowledge and strategies (Senge, 1999). Emerging from these pioneering efforts was the development of seven original archetypes. An understanding of one in particular, the Limits to Growth archetype, is central to this review of literature.

Within his research, Senge described a process known as the sigmoidal pattern of growth that is frequently found in nature. This phenomenon reveals that growth is often categorized by an initial rapid acceleration followed by a slower steady decline over a given period of time. This stagnation, or slow decline, is the realization of the existing limits to growth faced by an organization after a significant period of growth. The Limits to Growth archetype was developed to remind organizations of this pattern. That is, organizations frequently invest so heavily during periods of growth that they often disregard the likelihood of future periods of slower growth or decline. In lieu of pushing harder to overcome obstacles, this archetype makes visible the elements in play and the necessary corrective actions needed to manage the actual performance of the organization (Meadows, 2008; Senge, 1994; Senge, 1999). The limits defined by this archetype are categorized into three main categories: challenges associated with initiating change, sustaining change, and reorganizing and planning for future growth (Senge, 1999).

The Challenge of Initiating

The challenges of initiating change are often encountered early on during the course of a change initiative. They are often the result of the initial investment in change and directly counteract the reinforcing growth processes that are occurring within the organization. Senge (1999) identified the four limitations associated with initiating change as (a) not enough time, (b) no help, (c) not relevant, and (d) walking the talk.

As with any change initiative, there is a direct correlation between the size and rate of growth of a given change initiative and the required amount of time needed to be invested by members of the organization. When a discrepancy occurs between these amounts, members of the organization experience the limitation of *Not Enough Time*. There are two inherent challenges associated with this limitation. First, the time that is invested by individuals will be ineffective. This becomes evident through absenteeism at important meetings as the initiative progresses or even by a general unwillingness to commit in the first place. The second is the issue of time flexibility. Senge theorizes that even when individuals are willing to commit their time to an initiative, they often have so little control over their time that they frequently fail to participate (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008; Senge, 1999).

The limitation of *Not Enough Help* is also directly correlated with the size of a change initiative. The larger and more complex a change initiative is, the more resources and guidance are needed to support members of the organization's community. When this support is limited or non-existent, the change initiative begins to lose momentum and the opportunity to achieve success slips further out of reach. If this is allowed to persist, the organization will quickly diminish any remaining willingness among its members to commit to the initiative (Senge, 1999).

As a change initiative continues to grow, the limitation of *No Relevance* theorized that individuals within the organization must increase their commitment as well. Individuals will frequently pay lip service to an initiative because they see no connection with their daily responsibilities. This becomes especially evident when the vision for a change initiative is not aligned with the personal visions of the organization's employees. If the vision is not clearly communicated, often the initiative is simply viewed as another task that has been requested for completion rather than a potentially game changing initiative (Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008; Senge, 1999).

Studies have proven the correlation between the behavior of leadership and the influence upon the development of the characteristics of a learning organization (Lu, 2010; Moore, 2008). The limitation of *Walking the Talk* explored this concept. If individuals feel that they can trust the organization's leadership, they will be more inclined to commit to a given change initiative. This becomes most evident as the initiative develops momentum and the realization sets in that change is beginning to occur. Senge further theorized that there is an additional subtle phenomenon occurring with this limit to growth. He believes that personal values also influence an individual's willingness to commit to an initiative. If the individual senses a low level of clarity with respect to the values of those leading the organization, their willingness to engage in the change initiative will be minimal (Aiken & Keller, 2009; Senge, 1999).

The Challenge of Sustaining

Once a change initiative has been set in motion, an organization must focus its attention upon the challenge of sustaining the initiative. The next group of limitations explored those forces that oppose the sustainment of a change initiative as it begins to become formalized. They

are the development of (a) Fear and Anxiety, (b) Methods of Assessment and Measurement, and (c) the True Believers.

As a change initiative continues to accelerate, individuals within the organization must be willing to experience new learning opportunities. If they are unwilling to do so, or fear that they cannot do so safely, the limitation of *Anxiety and Fear* will begin to develop within segments of the organization's community. If this is allowed to continue, individuals will not be willing to remain committed to the change initiative. As long as fear and anxiety continue to persist, many future learning opportunities will not be captured (Schaffer, 2010; Senge, 1999; Van Dijk & Van Dick, 2009).

In addition to anxiety developing within the organization, individual expectations related to the change initiative become increasingly relevant to sustaining change. As a change initiative continues to mature, there will inevitably be periods of time where progress seems slow. Some members of the organization will begin to experience a difference between reality and the desired results. As cognitive dissonance continues to develop, interest in the initiative may decline or even be undermined. If this is allowed to persist, the credibility and momentum that has been developed will begin to decline (Senge, 1999).

Even those tasked with leading the initiative are not immune to the existence of challenges. In fact, simply being a *True Believer* has a direct impact upon existing relationships within the organization's community. As a result of their involvement in an initiative, members of a team who are leading change will frequently be viewed differently within the organization. This phenomenon occurs simply because a group of individuals has a vested interest in the success of the initiative. More specifically, members might be seen as a clique, have the appearance of preferential treatment, or simply be the subject of additional criticism within the

organization. As with the previous limitations, if this is allowed to persist, the formalization of the change initiative may be in jeopardy (Senge, 1999).

The Challenge of Reorganizing

As a change initiative continues to become formalized within the organization, the organization's community must continue to maintain movement towards the desired vision in bold and creative ways. In response to this understanding, the final limitations are purposely designed with a focus upon that future. The challenges associated with reorganizing to ensure the longevity of a change initiative focus upon (a) governance, (b) diffusion, and (c) strategy and purpose (Senge, 1999).

Organizational change is often accompanied by the realization that adjustments to the existing organizational governance might be needed to accommodate the resulting structure. Therefore, it is relevant to ensure governance remains in focus throughout the lifecycle of a change initiative. The leadership must begin to consider the impact at all levels of the organization and respond with the necessary structure that supports the desired change. As with any change initiative, it is often necessary to reevaluate existing reporting structures and the influence of power and authority each is granted (Senge, 1999).

These challenges are not solely limited to the organization's governance. Throughout the duration of the change initiative there will be many opportunities to grow the knowledge base of the organization. Many organizations fail to use this period of diffusion to take advantage of the learning experiences that have occurred as a result of the change initiative. As a result, the newly created knowledge is never captured and ultimately shared with other members of the organization. Any planning related to a change initiative should always include the development of informal networks such as a community of practice alongside a more formalized internal

communication structure to overcome this limitation (Harris & Jones, 2010; Senge, 1999).

If the organization effectively capitalizes upon the opportunity to expand its knowledge base during a period of change, they will position themselves in a way that avoids the challenges associated with organizational strategy and purpose. As a change initiative continues to be successful, questions are eventually raised regarding how an organization can use the newly acquired knowledge to compete more effectively in a changing world. Where the limits to growth were previously focused upon declining performance, they now become engaged in how effectively the organization will use what they have learned to better position themselves in the future. This response will ultimately determine the capacity of the organization's ability to reflect and discuss pertinent themes related to a new vision of the future openly amongst the larger community (Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007; Senge, 1999).

As the review of literature has navigated through several concepts associated with systems theory, the core ideas coalesce and become integral to the development of an understanding of learning organizations. Most relevant to this research is that these organizations embrace characteristics that emphasize the maximization of learning opportunities in an attempt to develop creativity and expand their existing knowledge base. This distinctiveness surfaces as a core advantage during periods of change within an organization.

The Learning Organization

The concept of a learning organization emerged during the early 1990s when organizations found themselves struggling to navigate the environments in which they operated. During this period of time the perception existed that many organizations were no longer able to respond to either opportunities or challenges in an innovative and flexible manner as they once had. Through careful introspection, it became quite evident that existing organizational cultures had in fact been limiting their own ability to engage in any significant reflection or learning

activity. Emerging from an existing body of knowledge related to organizational learning, the idea of a *learning organization* began to evolve. A learning organization has been defined as "... an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights" (Garvin, 2000, p. 11). However, for the purposes of this study, Peter Senge's definition of a learning organization will be utilized. Senge (1999) theorized that a learning organization is "... an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future." He further states that these organizations continue to engage in "learning that enhances our capacity to create" (p. 14). The very essence of this definition places a significant emphasis upon the way individuals within the organization think and interact.

When interaction among individuals is defined by characteristics such as open communication, inclusive decision making, or the clarification of roles, it has been found that organizational learning is greatly enhanced (Johnson, 2011). This orientation is the opposite of what one would find within many organizations. Traditionally, organizational culture creates an outward focus upon extrinsic factors such as deadlines, inherent challenges to a hierarchical structure, or even perceived limits to growth. When developed correctly, the culture within a learning organization attempts to shift the individual's orientation inward so that the emphasis is placed upon intrinsic factors that enhance both thinking and interaction of employees. The premise for this concept is that when the emphasis is placed upon individual or team thinking and interaction, many of the most daunting organizational challenges may be overcome (Senge, 2006).

Learning Organizations and Leading Change

The gradual development of a learning organization begins with reflecting upon how organizations develop learning capabilities. At varying points within his book *Dance of Change*, Senge (1999) reflected upon the idea that teaching has essentially replaced the concept of

learning within organizations today. He observed that an emphasis upon true learning not only occurs infrequently, but is something many organizations often fail to promote within their culture. It has been replaced with a lesser level of understanding aimed at producing a more passive result similar to that of rote learning (Kazar, 2005; Senge, 1999). The impact this phenomenon has upon leading change is significant. Consider a change initiative that is driven from a point of authority that fails to attain the widespread commitment needed to successfully sustain the initiative. One does not have to look very far to find examples of this within organizations today. Reflecting upon just this past year, consider how many initiatives were introduced with a directive emanating from within the hierarchy of an organization. Many of these change initiatives inherently adopt a type of learning that is viewed as required training associated with an employee's continued employment.

The inherent challenge associated with an authority driven change initiative is the fact that it is often viewed as the more efficient and organized option (Senge, 1999). It relies upon the existing hierarchy along with a command and control approach to developing buy in. Therefore, when considering the methods by which change can be led within an organization, this approach is selected more frequently. Though it may appear to be the more secure plan, there are two significant limitations to this method of change. The first is that authority driven change initiatives are only powerful when it is being driven by a champion. When the individual(s) who are championing the change initiative step aside, any momentum gained during the course of their tenure will often be diminished. Secondly, there is a direct correlation between the significance of an initiative and the investment of resources it receives. Authority driven change is less likely to survive if the continued investment of resources diminishes (Senge, 1999).

Change that is rooted within learning takes an altogether different approach. Although it

promotes the shared values and aspirations of the organization, this method is utilized less frequently than authority driven change. When developed genuinely, connecting change to learning opportunities creates the potential to build commitment through participation and action amongst the organization's community (Schultz, 2014). Furthermore, as this method is also not reliant upon a single individual, it is often described as being self-sustaining. Change that is learning driven also creates the opportunity for added communication relating to the existing challenges and opportunities associated with a given change initiative (Senge, 1999).

The underlying energy that drives the progression of a successful change initiative will continue to be the harnessing of existing learning capabilities. Senge (1999) defined these capabilities as the "skills and proficiencies that enable people to consistently enhance their capacity to produce results that are truly important to them" (p. 45). Senge also theorized that learners will engage in topics that they want to learn when an organization invests resources within them. The subsequent development of learning communities within an organization not only develops individual capacity, they also promote the development of a shared vision through collaborative communication and enhanced learning opportunities (Neumann-Boxer, 2012). This is something that cannot be rushed and can only be accomplished over time (Senge, 1999).

Senge's and Garvin's Learning Organization

Two prominent system theorists, Peter Senge and David Garvin, provide the framework for further exploration of learning organizations. They were selected because their scholarly work epitomizes a significant challenge faced by many organizations today; the enduring challenge to effectively translate theory into practice. Senge has advanced a significant amount of theoretical evidence rooted within years of experience, whereas his colleague, Garvin, prefers to navigate the more applicable reality of existing culture within organizations. This difference in approach to their academic endeavors in no way diminishes the quality or importance of their

contribution to both learning organizations and their larger body of work. It merely represents a unique perspective through which phenomena are examined.

Peter Senge believes that while humans have a natural desire to learn, the inherent culture and structure of our organizations often limits the capacity for growth. Senge's theory of a learning organization attempts to strengthen an organization's ability to capture the individual's commitment and capacity to engage in learning opportunities. Organizations which are able to accomplish this will better position themselves to respond creatively to an ever changing environment (DellaNeve, 2007). The five key components of Senge's learning organization are (a) personal mastery, (b) mental models, (c) shared vision, (d) team learning, and (e) systems thinking.

Though similar to Senge, David Garvin emphasized a more practical application compared to that of Senge's theoretical approach. Garvin's framework is rooted within the three concepts of meaning, management, and measurement. He believes that meaning should always be grounded in action while providing learning opportunities that individuals find applicable. Building upon this concept, management should strive to provide support that merely guides individuals in lieu of providing theoretical examples. Garvin's framework also establishes a definitive model for measurement. As with any initiative, it is imperative to assess the overall progress to ensure that continued movement is made towards a given objective. The unique difference within Garvin's framework is that both the rate and level of learning is measured throughout the organization and not simply by the accomplishment of enumerated tasks (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008). The five key components of Garvin's learning organization are (a) systemic problem solving, (b) experimenting with new approaches, (c) learning from experience, (d) learning from others, and (e) transfer of knowledge. When viewed

collectively, the proposed alignment of the characteristics of a learning organization according to Senge and Garvin generally align in the following way:

Table 1

Proposed Alignment of Garvin’s and Senge’s Characteristics of Learning Organizations

<u>David Garvin</u>	<u>Peter Senge</u>
Learning from Experience	Personal Mastery
Learning from Others	Team Learning
Experiment with New Approaches	Mental Models
Transfer of Knowledge	Shared Vision
Systemic Problem Solving	Systems Thinking

The concept of *personal mastery* is the realization of an individual’s personal vision and learning to cultivate the difference between where they are currently and where they would like to be in the future. Senge (1994) defined this discipline as “learning to expand our personal capacity to create the results we most desire, and creating the organizational environment which encourages all its members to develop themselves towards the goals and purposes they choose” (p. 6). It is through this realistic assessment that energy is created to either move the individual closer to the vision or possibly change the vision itself. As this process continues to evolve, the individual will continue to refine the competencies which will allow them to ultimately attain the established vision. When this process is aligned with an organization’s vision, the further development of a learning organization can occur (Senge, 1999). Garvin approached this concept from a more analytical frame of reference. He believes that one should *learn from experience* by collecting evidence that will systematically position the individual or organization relative to its intended goal. As a result of these efforts, learning will occur that can be shared among the organization’s community (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, et al., 2008).

Mental models create an individual's understanding and assumptions about the things that they experience in the world around them. Senge (1994) defined this discipline as "reflecting upon, continually clarifying, and improving our internal pictures of the world, and seeing how they shape our actions and decisions" (p. 6). He believes these models encompass the use of both reflection and inquiry to allow for the development of mental images. This is the reason why two individuals are able to view the same event but walk away with two very unique perspectives. Senge proposes that a learning organization aims to make visible the mental models of those within the organization. It is only when these models are shared that individuals are able to come to a better understanding of the events around them (Senge, 1999). Garvin advanced this concept by introducing the idea that not only should mental models be explored, they should be in focus with future challenges and not just the ones in the present. If an organization is solely focused upon the present without *experimenting with new approaches*, knowledge will be more difficult to cultivate. Together these processes build the learning capacity within the individual as well as the organization.

The concept of a *shared vision* is the mechanism by which organizations catalyze individual's visions. Senge (1994) defined this discipline as "building a sense of commitment in a group, by developing shared images of the future we seek to create, and the principles and guiding practices by which we hope to get there" (p. 6). He believes that by aligning the individual visions a sense of greater purpose will be cultivated within the learning organization. This sense of purpose is the equivalent of personal mastery, except on an organizational level. Furthermore, the resulting sense of commitment to the group or organization will promote movement towards a desired vision that the collective community seeks to create (Senge, 1999). This alignment also contributes to the development of cohesiveness within the organization.

Furthermore, Garvin theorized that the *transfer of knowledge* is more likely to occur amongst members as a result of the increased cohesiveness. This connected nature of the organization will ultimately protect against knowledge loss if members of the organization were to depart (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, et al., 2008).

Senge (1994) has defined the concept of *team learning* as “transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of the individual members’ talent” (p. 6). This concept is characterized by the need to explore complex issues, develop innovated responses, and having each member of a team play a critical role in the process. The concept is frequently defined by the old adage that the sum is greater than the individual parts (Senge, 1999). Garvin, however, introduced a slightly different approach with respect to team learning. He believes that *learning from others* incorporates the use of benchmarks, or starting points, from which learning opportunities will be shared within the organization. In doing so, the opportunity to create and develop new and improved practices will emerge from existing knowledge in lieu of developing new or innovated responses from a fresh perspective (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, et al., 2008).

Senge (1994) proposes that *Systems Thinking* will alter the way that we look at complex problems within our organizations. More specifically, this perspective will allow individuals to more effectively comprehend change and how it is connected to various elements within an organization. He has defined this mode of thinking as “a way of thinking about, and a language for describing and understanding, the forces and interrelationships that shape the behavior of systems.” Senge further emphasized that “this discipline helps us see how to change systems more effectively and to act more in tune with the larger processes of the natural world” (p. 6). It is not until the existing connections are made visible that a more complete understanding of an

event can be fully comprehended (Senge, 1999). Garvin's *systemic problem solving* essentially aligns with Senge's concept of systems thinking. He believes that within learning organizations, the existence of a more systemic approach to addressing challenges is utilized. In doing so, evidence that is gathered through more scientific methods will provide the means to develop understanding as opposed to anecdotal evidence (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, et al., 2008). With both concepts, systems thinking forces individuals and organizations to look at the complete picture rather than an isolated snapshot that is more typically observed.

With an understanding of the ideal culture in which change is likely to succeed, this review of literature next turns its attention towards examining several theories of organizational change. The theories included have in some way contributed significantly to the collective body of scholarly work related to organizational change. More significantly, they represent both the linear and non-linear approach to leading change.

Theories of Organizational Change

Developing an understanding of the complexity of change is critical for organizations seeking to advance their mission and vision. To accomplish this, one must make visible the intricate patterns of individual behavior and motivation existing within the culture of an organization. In the absence of a lens to view the existing culture, efforts spent attempting to develop the widespread commitment needed to lead organizational change will not attain the desired results.

Peter Senge's Catalyst for Change

There is a famous quotation from the Chinese philosopher Lau Tzu that states, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Though this widely accepted interpretation can be found within many publications, a more accurate translation reads, "A journey of a thousand miles begins beneath one's feet." Though the difference is subtle, there is

a shift of emphasis from the notion of a *first step* to an understanding that action emerges from an environment void of movement (Moncur, 2010). The capacity to reflect critically upon this concept through the lens of change leadership provides a powerful understanding of what is required to successfully bring about change within an organization.

Senge proposed that there are three fundamental reinforcing processes, that when understood, have the potential to result in profound change that is sustainable within an organization. They are (a) enhancing personal results, (b) developing networks of committed people, and (c) improving organizational results (Senge, 1999). The commonality between each of these processes is a calculated investment in a change initiative. The resulting force that is generated as a result of that investment moves an organization towards a desired vision of the future and away from an environment once characterized by stillness or stagnation.

Of equal importance to the creation of movement is the initial direction and point upon which the force is applied. Quite frequently, organizations direct resources towards more pronounced symptoms as opposed to the underlying issues impeding an organization from reaching its desired vision. However, to be effective, these resources should be directed towards building the capacity of the individual's learning capabilities. Senge (1999) defined learning capabilities as "the skills and proficiencies that, amongst individuals, teams, and larger communities, enable people to consistently enhance their capacity to produce results that are truly important to them. In other words, learning capabilities enable us to learn" (p. 45). When an organization does this successfully, it will be able to connect an individual's personal vision with the desired vision of the organization. It is only then that the individual's capacity to learn will be engaged.

As with any change initiative, a significant investment of time, energy, and resources is

often required. It is therefore important to ensure efforts are accompanied by several visible elements if the change initiative is to be sustainable. This investment begins with the allowance of time for both action and reflection. Members of the organization need to be given the opportunity to seek further understanding while retaining the ability to reflect critically about the change initiative (Tolchinsky, 2014). It is equally important that this environment is created in such a way that individuals or teams are able to reflect without the pressure of having to make a choice. This investment must also seek to develop both the individual and collective capacities of members of the organization. As the focus is upon learning capabilities, careful consideration must be given to emphasize those skills and proficiencies which align not only with the personal visions of the employees, but the vision of the change initiative itself. Consideration must also be taken to ensure the appropriate mechanisms are in place to assess the impact of any investment of resources. As the investment will be linked to improving the capacity of both individuals and teams within the organization, benchmarking against real strategic objectives of the organization should be utilized wherever possible (Senge, 1999).

Personal results. The first of Senge's three reinforcing growth processes, an investment within the learning capabilities of the individual or team, captures the inherent passion humans have for achieving results. Senge has theorized that organizations seeking to sustain deep lasting change need to embrace this natural source of reinforcing energy (Senge, 1999). Often organizations will hold tightly to the more traditional model of the employee serving as a resource for the organization. In doing so, the success of a change initiative becomes reliant upon the existing hierarchy within the organization. Though this may succeed initially, the results are often short-lived. It is only when the full learning capabilities of the individual or team are harnessed that the emergence of this reinforcing growth process will occur. It is the result of this

growth process that truly sustainable change within an organization can begin to develop.

When the investment is made to develop the learning capability of the individuals within the organization's community, it becomes easier to engage their commitment, excitement, and creativity. This becomes even more evident when the individual has begun to experience the results of the investment from the organization. As the individual's enthusiasm continues to grow, further investment will continue to perpetuate this reinforcing growth process. Once this process has been initiated, the energy created will begin to feed the two subsequent reinforcing growth processes which lead to the development of sustainable change within an organization.

It is worth briefly exploring Senge's thoughts regarding how individuals discover, or rediscover, their inherent passion for achieving results through the attainment of their own personal visions. Within his book *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge (2006) delves deeply into the characteristic of personal mastery. This concept is defined as "the way by which an individual defines their personal vision, assesses their current reality, and challenges the creative tension between the two" (Senge, 2006). Senge then turns his attention to developing a further understanding of personal vision. This is accomplished by establishing the following definitions for the terms purpose and vision. *Purpose* is described as a general movement whereas *vision* is movement towards a specific or desired destination (Senge, 2006).

In applying this construct to the first reinforcing growth process, we can further realize the importance of ensuring that change initiatives embody the characteristic of personal vision. More importantly, organizations which invest in change initiatives that align with personal visions have the potential to create significant intrinsic motivation. This is the force which moves individuals toward their own established personal vision while resulting in an increased level of satisfaction and willingness to commit to a larger change initiative.

Networks of people. The second of Senge's three reinforcing growth processes, the existence of formal or informal networks within an organization, provides the structure through which change will diffuse within an organization. Research has shown that these existing communities of practice are often superior to that of a formal hierarchy when trying to infuse new ideas within an existing culture (Senge, 1999; Wheatley, 2007). Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) defined a *community of practice* as "groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for a joint enterprise" and "who share their experiences and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems" (p. 139). The existence of collaborative networks within organizations that support the creation and diffusion of knowledge is not a new concept. In fact, evidence has shown the utilization of such networks as early as the middle ages throughout Europe when skilled laborers and artisans shared innovations amongst practitioners.

The shift in organizational theory during the twentieth century from a mechanical lens to the organization being viewed as an organism with interconnected needs provides a great metaphor for the second reinforcing loop (Morgan, 1997). Organizations that have successfully generated profound change initiatives have done so through internal networks of individuals who are passionately involved with the desired change (Senge, 1999). Although the source of momentum for this reinforcing growth process remains in part the initial investment within the individual's personal vision, it is the informal networks which are primarily responsible for the diffusion of energy within the organization.

Several characteristics of these communities of practice promote the sustainability of this source of energy within an organization. Most notably, many of these networks are natural extensions of the existing organizational community. As many individuals within an organization

are viewed as colleagues, the infusion of any new idea takes advantage of having the details of a given change initiative spread through credible sources. This is due to the fact that our daily sources of information and sense of security reside within these well developed and protected networks (Senge, 1999). For example, as momentum continues to develop within the first reinforcing growth process, the organization will begin to experience the diffusion of energy driven by the interest in the change initiative from additional individuals within existing informal networks. Over time, additional members within these networks develop a higher level of interest and desire to become involved with the proposed changed initiative. The rate at which the change initiative is diffused within the organization is directly correlated to the momentum developed within the first reinforcing growth process. If an organization can effectively connect a change initiative to a personal vision, the greater the rate at which members within the informal networks will develop interest. This phenomenon has been summed up so eloquently by John Seely Brown, previous vice-president of Xerox, when he said “Organizations are webs of participation. Change the participation and you change the organization” (Senge, 1999, p. 49).

Organizational advancement. The last of the reinforcing growth processes defined by Senge (1999) is the achievement of greater organizational outcomes attained through the development of new practices. These new practices and greater organizational results are all derived from the energy created within the first two reinforcing growth process. As the organization continues to invest in the learning capabilities of the individuals and teams within the organization, this third reinforcing growth process will continually give rise to new and improved practices. This momentum will propel an organization towards achieving the desired vision established not only for a given change initiative, but, will advance the organization towards achieving its overall mission.

As with the previous reinforcing growth processes, a greater commitment to change will occur when an organization is able to align a vision for change closely with an individual or team's aspirations. As new practices lead to better results, members of the organization will be provided with visible affirmation that a given change initiative can further their own personal visions. This point of connection will provide the context for further exploration and self-reflection on behalf of the individual or team. In doing so, commitment for those vested within the initiative will strengthen while those not yet on board will be afforded the opportunity for further consideration.

James Kotter's Eight Steps to Anchoring Change

James Kotter (2012) theorized that sustainable change is often successful when an organization navigates the journey through a series of distinct phases. He further emphasized that no matter what strategy is ultimately decided upon, it must be designed to modify strategies, reengineer processes, and enhance quality within an organization. Although Kotter's eight steps to anchoring change is a linear process, the theory is constructed similar to the limits to growth archetype that Senge incorporates within his own catalyst for change theory. More specifically, Kotter's eight steps each align with a fundamental error he believes undermines, or limits, the likelihood of success of a change initiative within an organization.

Kotter's eight stages are rooted within the five following distinct categories of influence: (a) managerial, (b) leadership, (c) cultural, (d) political, and (e) temporal. He emphasizes that movement through these phases not only takes a considerable amount of time, but, skipping phases along the way will rarely produce the desired results of the change initiative. Though it is certainly possible to be operating in more than one phase at any given time, any mistakes along the way will have a cumulative effect that often result in the loss of any momentum that may

have been developed (Kotter, 2007).

The first four steps posited by Kotter are specifically designed to intervene in the organization's culture. They begin with *establishing a sense of urgency*. Kotter believes that one of the more frequent mistakes made by organizations is that they do not create a heightened sense of urgency relating to the change initiative. Whether organizations overestimate how much they feel they can accomplish or underestimate an individual's willingness to change, nothing can be accomplished without a sense of importance. In either case, allowing complacency to develop within the organization will ultimately result in a failed transformation (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012).

Once a sense of urgency is created, it is then important to ensure the creation of a *guiding coalition*. Change initiatives that lack this component can manage to be successful for a while. However, over a period of time, change that lacks the vested interest of a group will ultimately succumb to countervailing forces within the organization. Kotter further emphasized that it is not enough just to include senior leaders or more influential members of the organization. A significant portion of the larger population must be willing to commit to the change initiative if it is to develop any kind of momentum (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012; Kotter, 2013).

Though the first two steps are important components of Kotter's theory, the development of a vision and strategy is critically important to the success of any change initiative. Vision will ultimately provide direction, alignment of action, and inspiration to the organization's community during the period of change. The vision of a given change initiative may become more refined as the guiding coalition continues their march towards implementation, and failing to establish a vision from the onset will inevitably result in confusion and wasted energy. Kotter recommends that if a vision cannot be described in five minutes or less, without getting a

reaction that signifies understanding and interest, the vision for the change initiative is not effective enough to proceed (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012).

Once the vision for change has been established, it is then important to ensure that it has been effectively communicated to the organization. Kotter reaffirmed the idea that without frequent and credible communication, the vision for an initiative will never be captured by members of the organization's community. Often this task encounters three typical challenges that impede the delivery of a credible vision. First, an effective communication plan is developed but it is only delivered via email or within a few scarcely attended meetings. The second occurs when the executive leadership delivers a message, however, the managers subsequently fail to rally the troops. The last common challenge is when a large amount of resources are invested in communication materials, but the behavior of the organization's leadership counteracts the vision for the change. Kotter uses this step to remind those tasked with leading change that successful transformation integrates both words and actions within many channels of communication to ensure the vision is reaching deep within the levels of the organization (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012).

As the first four steps are dedicated to preparing the organization for change, the next three are designed to introduce the new strategies, processes, and knowledge needed to support the transformation. The fifth step in Kotter's theory is focused upon *empowering employees for action*. As one would expect, effectively communicating a vision is not sufficient to bring about change within an organization. There must be a willingness to commit on the part of the organization's community. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that any obstacles that prevent individuals from doing so in a familiar or safe environment are diminished or removed. Examples of such barriers might be issues relating to challenges within the organizational

structure, identifying credible sources of information, or even developing a comfort level for providing honest feedback about the change initiative itself. Even when employees are willing to accept change, barriers such as these will likely prohibit them from supporting the change initiative (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012).

After scanning for barriers within the environment, organizations must establish a realistic timeframe for the life cycle of the change initiative. Often forgotten is the fact that significant and sustainable change within an organization can only occur over a period of time. Therefore, it becomes critical to provide visible *short-term wins* to allow members of the organization to experience success during the course of the initiative. Kotter does emphasize that there is a difference between creating these wins versus hoping that they will occur. The first is active and the latter is passive. He believes that it is necessary to find ways to measure and obtain performance improvements that demonstrate movement towards a guiding vision. Failure to accomplish this within the first six to eighteen months will often result in employees abandoning the vision or alternatively seeking alignment with those opposing the change initiative (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012).

Kotter's seventh step is designed to remind organizations that the temptation to declare victory too early during the course of a change initiative is a risky behavior. Though the declaration of success for short-term improvements is warranted, he cautions that hinting that the job is nearing completion is something to be avoided at all costs. As a change initiative takes significant time before it becomes fully institutionalized, Kotter recommends being very careful with how these moments of celebration are managed. If they are misinterpreted, the possibility exists that any developed momentum could in fact be diminished. This will occur because employees begin to get a sense that their efforts have been effective and they can either relax or

return to their usual responsibilities. He suggested using short-term wins to develop the energy and commitment needed to tackle larger problems. This concept becomes increasingly evident as small wins begin to occur and the relationship between the initiators and detractors takes on new relevance (Kotter, 2007; Kotter 2012).

The last step within Kotter's theory grounds the change initiative within the existing culture in hopes that the transformation ultimately becomes part of the daily life within the organization. Kotter emphasized that until the new way of doing things becomes part of the organization's culture, there will always be energy directed towards diminishing the change initiative. Therefore, it is imperative that the transformation is *anchored within the organizational culture*. He emphasized that it is not simply enough just to exhibit the attitudes and behaviors that align with the change initiative. In fact, organizations should be very deliberate in making visible the link between how those specific behaviors and attitudes have contributed to improved performance as a result of the change initiative. Furthermore, Kotter recommended that as new generations of managers arise within the organization, they each should be fully committed to the personification of the core components the change initiative embodies (Kotter, 2007; Kotter, 2012).

Hall and Hord's Concerns Based Adoption Model

Similar to Senge, Garvin, and Kotter, Hall and Hord also expected the change facilitator to think and observe systemically throughout the life cycle of the change initiative. They believe that these critical observations provide opportune moments, or interventions, for the facilitator to make the necessary adjustments which lead to the adoption and persistence of a successful change initiative (Hall & Hord, 1987). Their concerns based adoption model (CBAM) is rooted within more than thirty years of research and provide the change facilitator three primary tools

by which they can assess the personal perceptions of those impacted by change. Their model is supported by the belief that concerns related to change within an organization are fairly predictable. Therefore, the opportunity to make visible the perceptions of individuals impacted by change will allow for a more valuable assessment of the transformation (Alderton, 2014; Anderson, 1997). Hall and Hord believe this can be accomplished by measuring, describing, and explaining the progression of change. They also reaffirmed the idea that change is in fact a process and not an event. Those tasked with leading change need to remain aware that transformation will always be accomplished by individuals through a highly personal process. Because of this, the parallel growth of beliefs, attitudes, and motivation will always accompany any change initiative (Anderson, 1997). As a result of these characteristics, Hall and Hord's (1987) theory was developed to include three major components designed to both elicit and evaluate evidence related to the individual's perception of a change initiative. They are (a) stages of concern (SoC), (b) levels of use of an innovation (LoU), and (c) innovation configurations (IC).

The first diagnostic tool designed by Hall and Hord to assess the diffusion of a change initiative are the *stages of concern* (SoC). This framework was designed to describe the feelings and motivations of those affected by change at various points in time throughout the duration of the change initiative. These responses are categorized into six stages ranging from little to no knowledge of the change initiative through full adoption with thoughts about further integration of the new processes or procedures. Movement within the scale will vary according to the position and involvement of the individual within the organization. Hall and Hord noted that for some individuals, progression through all of the stages may in fact never occur (Anderson, 1997; Hall & Hord, 1987; Roach, Kratochwill, & Frank, 2009). Accompanying the development of the

stages of concern are three recommended measures of assessment. They each were created to measure the focus and intensity of concern an individual exhibits when dealing with some aspect of the change initiative.

The first of the three assessment tools is defined as *one-legged conferencing*. This assessment method is a skilled approach that transitions a chance encounter with an individual into an opportunity to assess their relative concern regarding a particular aspect of the change initiative. The second method of assessment incorporated the use of *open ended statements*. They proposed that the success of a change initiative depends upon the ability of the change facilitator to maximize the opportunity to capture feedback from those impacted by change. This method provides individuals the opportunity to reply openly in a written format to a generic statement inquiring about their concerns related to a change initiative. The strength of this method is that the facilitator is able to not only identify an individual's concerns, but also establish a level of intensity associated with their beliefs. The last method of assessment is the *stages of concern questionnaire*. The questionnaire is a more formal method of assessment that incorporates thirty-five questions that yield responses associated an individual's attitudes, feelings, and concerns relating to the change initiative. These responses are collected using a seven point Likert scale, that when analyzed, correlate to both a stage of concern and level of intensity (Hall & Hord, 1987; Roach et al., 2009).

The emphasis of the stages of concern and the accompanying methods of assessment are to ensure that the change facilitator is not unintentionally imparting their own frame of reference upon individuals within the organization. This becomes especially important when adjustments need to be made by the change facilitator(s) throughout the duration of the change initiative.

The second diagnostic tool developed by Hall and Hord is the *levels of use of an*

innovation (LoU). This assessment tool is designed to provide visibility into the perceived attitudes and behavior of individuals as it relates to the adoption of a change initiative within an organization. Though similar to the stages of concern, the levels of use measures behavior across eight stages based upon what can be observed by the change facilitator. The levels range from disinterest at the lower end to fully engaged and supportive at the higher end. Hall and Hord emphasized that individuals will typically move through the levels, however, this progression may not necessarily include each level. Differences in variables such as skills set, attitudes and motivation, awareness of the change initiative, and self-efficacy directly influence positioning within the scale (Hall & Hord, 1987; Roach et al., 2009; Anderson, 1997).

The third diagnostic tool, *innovation configurations (IC)*, was developed to assess the actual results of a change initiative by seeking to understand the varied adaptations existing within the organization. As with any change initiative, there is always a difference between what is planned and what develops when the initiative is launched. Hall and Hord theorized that developing an understanding of the existing adaptations is essential knowledge for the change facilitator(s). More specifically, the information is used to determine if there is a need to provide additional guidance so that the adaptation is able to be adjusted to more closely resemble the vision of the organization (Anderson, 1997; Hall & Hord, 1987; Roach et al., 2009).

Though the framework and methodology provided key elements to support the change process, Hall & Hord remind organizations and change facilitators that the three diagnostic tools should be used independently of each other. Each component is intended to contribute to the larger understanding of how to guide an organization through the process of change.

Lewin's Three Stages of Organizational Change

Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, rooted his scholarly work related to organizational change within the search to discover why individuals resist change so strongly and what can be done to overcome this resistance. His three step model, also known as the unfreezing-change-refreezing model, was designed to move organizations through a period of rejecting past knowledge and replacing it with knowledge associated with a future state. Lewin's theory, similar to each of the previous change theories, emphasized the idea that change involves movement by a group. Although a vested interest by individuals is important, lacking the larger scale commitment from a cohesive group will often result in a failed change initiative (Burnes, 2004; Carter, 2008; Schein, 1999a, 1999b). Therefore, Lewin theorized that any sustainable change initiative will include three distinct phases identified by periods of (a) unfreezing, (b) moving, and (c) refreezing.

Lewin's *unfreezing* phase purposely drives the motivation to change. As he believes that human behavior is reinforced by observational learning and cultural influences, change can only occur when new forces disrupt an existing environment. These forces are designed to directly impact the localized environment that each individual navigates on a daily basis within the organization. It is through the disruption of the existing balance that change can begin to occur (Lewin, 1974, Schein, 1999b).

Lewin proposed that there are three distinct processes to the unfreezing phase. The first is removing the credibility of the status quo. By disconfirming the current way of doing things, individuals within the organization will become uncomfortable with existing reality. This discomfort signifies the beginning of the second process. As previously held beliefs are beginning to be questioned, a sense of anxiety will begin to emerge. This anxiety is often

associated with feelings of survival relating to one's position within the organization. Those tasked with leading change need to ensure that learning opportunities are within reach. These learning opportunities signify the beginning of the third process. To ease the existing anxiety, the introduction of a safe transition to the new vision supported by a model of desired behavior must be made available to members of the organization. Lewin strongly emphasized that it is necessary to move beyond any existing anxiety in order for the change initiative to advance (Lewin, 1974; Schein, 1999a, 1999b).

The second phase in Lewin's theory focused upon the implementation of the desired changes within the organization. This phase commences when there is sufficient discontent with the existing conditions. Though many organizations attempt to develop a strategic approach to managing change, Lewin reaffirmed the understanding that strategy and change can present unknown challenges. Any attempt to move a community of individuals towards a desired vision will often surface many forces that alter the path towards the desired vision. Lewin (1974) further emphasized this point when he stated that unfreezing "... creates motivation to learn but it does not necessarily control or predict the direction" (p. 985). As a result, organizations need to take into account all available options that may alter the path towards the successful implementation of a change initiative (Burnes, 2004). Ensuring that awareness remains focused upon the gap between the present state and what is proposed remains critical during this phase (Lewin, 1974; Schein, 1999b).

The *refreezing* phase of Lewin's model restores and makes permanent the balance that was destroyed within the unfreezing phase. This is accomplished at a point when the desired new behavior has begun to institutionalize. This last step should be approached with great care. The organization needs to ensure that prior to refreezing the new behavior has aligned with the

cultural norms within the organization. If they have not done so yet, any attempt to refreeze will only result in additional distress (Burnes, 2004; Schein, 1999b).

Chapter Summary

There is a unique occurrence within chaos theory which periodically emerges within the scholarly work of Margaret Wheatley. It is the concept known as the “strange attractor”. As the name implies, chaos theory is a division of science which explores highly unstable systems that are sensitive to change. Yet, emerging from this chaotic environment is a very predictable and scientific order. The challenge to viewing such symmetrical patterns within a system is a matter of perspective. Wheatley (1993) states that:

If you look moment to moment, you will not see a pattern. You will see what looks like a system out of control because the behavior jumps all over the place. But, if you stand back far enough, if you wait over time, scale or distance, you will observe the order that is in chaos. (p. 4)

There is great relevance in Wheatley’s words regarding the order found within chaotic systems. At times, the environment and frenetic pace associated with change initiatives will appear to share similar characteristics with that of an unstable system. The challenge for organizations is to remain cognizant of the fact that within their culture exists a very intricate pattern of behavior that is being purposely, or in some cases, unintentionally disrupted. What may seem unstable or unpredictable at close range may very well in fact be highly orchestrated and purposeful when viewed from a vantage point further removed from the center of change. The scholarly work reviewed in this chapter was selected to create the vantage point for interpreting the narratives of those present with Conservatory of Performing Arts during its period of significant change.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Study

In the late 1960s the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University emerged from an ambitious vision to become a significant contributor to cultural leadership within its sphere of influence. Many organizations begin with the noblest of visions but more frequently fall short of attaining them. Sixty years later, the Conservatory appears to be positioned within reach of their vision of cultural leadership within its region. This study was designed to document that journey through the voices of those present with the Conservatory during this period of growth. In doing so, the narratives can further advance our understanding of why some organizations excel at leading significant change.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative approach to research. This was selected because the purpose of the study aimed to develop a first person perspective of how the Conservatory infused meaning, management, and measurement into their culture during the course of a significant change initiative. As a result, a deep understanding of both the individual experience as well as the collective knowledge of the organization emerged. Robert Stake likens this experience to the concept of *verstehen*. *Verstehen* (vair stay'en) is the German word for personal understanding. Qualitative research places great value upon developing an understanding of phenomenon through the lens of the human experience (Stake, 2010).

This study also incorporated the use of narrative analysis as a means to further develop understanding. As the name implies, a narrative analysis seeks to make visible the accounts or stories of individuals, groups, societies, and cultures. Through the use of thematic analysis, a specific approach of narrative analysis, the evidence was transformed from a collection of stories

into emerging patterns and themes that convey the journey of the Conservatory of Performing Arts (Reissman, 2008).

As qualitative research produces a high volume of evidence, it remained imperative to develop the framework to guide the researcher's strategy. Patton (2002) recommended beginning by developing an acute awareness of the unique stages associated with qualitative analysis. Specifically, an understanding that interviews and observations occurring during the early part of the data collection will produce preliminary findings. As the collection process continued, a gradual shift occurred that allowed the evidence to substantially support deepening insights and emerging patterns. Being sensitive to this process enabled the study to evolve when and where it was required to do so.

During the course of the study, particular attention was given to the concepts of converging and diverging evidence (Patton, 2002). This was accomplished by remaining aware of the existing patterns and themes that aligned with the theories explored within the review of literature. These reoccurring examples collected from multiple sources were carefully examined for accuracy and reliability. A similar process was undertaken for the findings which could not be aligned with the theories explored within the review of literature. They were carefully reviewed to determine the level of relevance in relation to the theoretical viewpoints upon which the study was developed.

As the body of evidence continued to expand towards the point of saturation, the process of continuous review and refinement provided the opportunity to inventory what data had been collected. In doing so, the evidence was properly documented, identified, and short-comings within the research were quickly identified. These periodic evaluations also served as an opportunity to ensure that data were safely stored in varying formats within multiple locations.

Research Questions

As this study documented the journey through a significant change initiative that resulted in the development of an organization and its culture, the following research questions were presented:

1. Is the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University a learning organization?
If so, what evidence supports this assertion?
2. How did the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University infuse meaning, management, and measurement within its culture?
3. What organizational strategies enable the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?
4. What attitudes and/or beliefs enable members the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?

Researcher Bias

A potential limitation associated with this study is that the researcher is employed by and reports directly to the Senior Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs at the institution in which the Conservatory is located. The Conservatory is also a direct report to the Senior Vice President. Therefore, it was critical that the researcher remained cognizant of any actual or perceived influences inherent to the methods by which the research was conducted.

Currently, the researcher's role within the institution has no established reporting lines to the Conservatory of Performing Arts. However, the researcher's role does involve significant leadership and support of university wide initiatives that may involve the Conservatory. The researcher believed the potential for participants to feel coerced into participation or to be less than honest with their responses was not a significant issue within the proposed research.

Reliance upon this initial assessment, however, did not eliminate the need to ensure that proper protocol was sustained for all research participants over the duration of the research.

Concerns regarding the physical observation of participants and phenomena associated with the Conservatory of Performing Arts were also addressed. Segments of the study included active participant observation within varying environments such as advising sessions, classes, rehearsals, and production or department meetings. As the Conservatory is a very closely knit community, the introduction of this observation method occurred with careful consideration. As this observation method may introduce potential influence and loss of objectivity within the research process, the use of active participant observation was utilized only when attempting to acquire additional insight or validate findings (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009).

In further support of the findings, the researcher aligned the collected qualitative evidence with existing quantitative data collected by the Office of Institutional Research. Information related to the academic performance, persistence, and graduation rates of conservatory students was incorporated into the study. A similar request was also made to obtain faculty satisfaction surveys and any other sources of data related to the attainment of the organization's vision. In keeping with the existing standards of anonymity, any information that could have potentially identified a participant was removed by the researcher throughout the analysis and presentation of findings.

Sample Size and Selection

This case study incorporated the use of purposeful sampling to select the participants from whom the narratives were collected. The purposeful selection of participants was guided by the belief that they will collectively represent the organization while providing insightful perspectives that reveal the development of the Conservatory's culture from the late 1950s

through the present day.

One advantage of a qualitative study is that the population remained small enough to allow for a deeper level of interaction, yet, large enough to reach a point of saturation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Through the assistance of the Theatre and Dance programs within the Conservatory, a non-random stratified sample of the students, faculty, administrators and alumni was selected for participation. The use of a stratified sample also ensured that a range of individual characteristics was represented within the study so that any findings were generalizable to the larger population. The sample of five students and two alumni ensured, where possible, an equitable representation of talent level, diversity, academic and professional performance, and demographic characteristics. These characteristics were selected based upon the recommendation of the Conservatory due to the fact that an admission decision is reached by assessing an applicant's level of academic and performance standards. The incorporation of the additional demographic information was included to further support the theoretical framework upon which the study was constructed. The sample of seven faculty members ensured, where possible, an equitable representation of professional experience and length of service to the university. In addition to this group, four members of the administration employed by the university and two members of the extended university community were also selected for participation.

Validity and Reliability

The inclusion of methods of validity and reliability are commonly used as the metric by which quality research is measured (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2006). In an attempt to establish construct validity, this study was developed upon a theoretical framework that explored both organizational change theory and personal narratives that have afforded the Conservatory of

Performing Arts the opportunity to develop, lead, and assess a successful change initiative. An interview protocol was developed that identified and assessed these specific components in relation to the expected outcomes. This study also attempted to increase validity through the use of internal validity. Specifically, the use of pattern matching and addressing rival theoretical explanations explored within the review of literature and the analysis of findings (Yin, 2006).

The inclusion of triangulation to further substantiate findings within case study research cannot be undervalued (Stake, 2010; Yin, 2006). Patton (2002) proposed four methods of triangulation that are used in an attempt to develop converging lines of inquiry. They are: (a) methods triangulation, (b) data source triangulation, (c) analyst triangulation, and (d) theory triangulation. This study incorporated the use of data source triangulation by collecting and comparing evidence from multiple sources such as archival documents like the university fact books, syllabi, and accreditation reports along with the participant interviews and observations. In support of this, theory triangulation was also utilized within the study. This was accomplished by comparing the emerging themes from the archival evidence, participant interviews and observations, and the organizational change theory reviewed in Chapter 2. These two methods of triangulation supported and aligned with the use of explanation building as the primary analytical strategy within the study.

With respect to reliability, Yin (2006) recommended to proceed with the research as if the study will be subjected to ongoing review. For the purpose of any research, this guidance seemed to be valuable advice. Yin further emphasizes that the key characteristic of a reliable study is consistency. The development of well documented procedures that can be followed by future researchers will likely increase the chances of obtaining similar findings (Yin, 2006).

Pilot Study

Prior to beginning the period of data collection, the interview and follow-up questions were piloted with a group of participants not selected for participation in the study. The group consisted of two faculty members, one current student, and one university administrator. For the purposes of the study, the pilot served two primary purposes. The first was to ensure that both the interview protocol and follow-up questions were considered to be both valid and reliable. This was accomplished through asking the participants to respond to the questions as they would normally do so during the course of the actual study. During the course of the interview, the participants were directed to identify any deficiencies that should be corrected or potential improvements that could be made to the interview or follow-up questions. The participants were also specifically asked to reflect upon the sequence and content of the questions and to provide feedback related to clarity, purpose, and their willingness to share their experiences relating to the Conservatory.

In addition to having the participants pilot the questions, behavioral coding was utilized by the researcher to further evaluate the interview questions. The coding focused upon identifying reactions which were outside of the anticipated response to a given question. These behaviors were characterized by an increased response time or hesitancy with answering a particular question openly. The purpose for this was to identify and eliminate any issues associated with the wording or interpretation of a question. The use of behavioral coding provided further opportunity for the researcher to determine if a question was producing the anticipated response (Saldana, 2009).

The pilot study also provided an opportunity for the researcher to perform an initial coding and analysis of the responses to the interview questions. The narrative analysis was accomplished by the use of thematic analysis, the primary method that was utilized within the

study. Through the development of categories based upon emerging themes identified by the participants of the pilot study, the researcher was able to anticipate and identify relevant evidence more effectively during the period of data collection.

NVivo, the qualitative research software, was not utilized during the course of the pilot study. This purposeful decision was made due to the fact that all coding and analysis undertaken during the actual study was done so by the researcher. NVivo was only utilized as a secondary method of analyzing the evidence collected by the study.

Within three days of the conclusion of the pilot session, a summary of findings was sent to the individuals who participated in the pilot interviews. This summary included a detailed explanation of the recommended changes that were implemented to ensure that the findings were accurately interpreted by the researcher.

Data Collection

Interviews

The primary method of data collection for this study was individual semi-structured interviews. These sessions were purposely designed to feel more like guided discussions as opposed to a more formal interview. Depending upon a participant's role within the Conservatory, a series of leading questions were used to encourage discussion centered upon the main research questions presented by the study (Appendix C-G). As a result, the interviewee was more likely to genuinely react to prompts and follow-up questions as opposed to simply responding as an informant (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2006). This provided the opportunity to acquire a deeper understanding of the culture that existed within the Conservatory of Performing Arts while providing participants the comfort to share facets of experiences previously unknown to the researcher.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the twenty participants were asked to return a signed copy of the Informed Consent form (Appendix B). Upon receipt, the interview was then scheduled. With the exception of two interviews, each of the sessions was conducted in person. These took place at a location that was not only convenient to the participant, but offered a private and quiet space for the discussion to occur. The remaining two interviews were not able to be done in person due to geographic distance. For these, one participant opted to utilize video conferencing technology whereas another participated over the phone. Regardless of location, all of the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. To ensure the integrity of the findings, the transcripts of the interviews were then returned to the participant to verify its accuracy. When received, any corrections or clarifications noted by the participants were made accordingly.

Though interviews were an important source of information for this case study, challenges with relying heavily upon this method of data collection did exist. Periodic reflection upon the interview questions ensured the development of a line of inquiry reflective of the purpose of the intended research. Careful consideration was also taken to ensure the line of questioning not only remained unbiased, but that the questions elicited responses that contributed information directly relating to the study's research questions (Yin, 2006).

Observations

As case study research should take place within natural settings, observations occurred in both participant and non-participant formats throughout the data collection phase of the study. These focused observations were guided by the insights that emerged from the interviews and review of archival evidence as the study progressed (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2006). The researcher utilized a non-participant approach to identify and observe cultural phenomena occurring within the physical environment of the hallways, offices, and performance studios. Observations that

took place within common areas such as the hallways were done without making any prior arrangement, although verbal permission to conduct these observations was granted by the Conservatory prior to the beginning of the study. Those observations occurring within an office or performance studio required the permission of faculty, administration, and students. This request for observation, when possible, was obtained at a minimum of two days in advance to ensure minimal interruption to the participant's schedule.

When needed, the use of active participant observation was utilized to provide further clarification of information obtained through non-participant observations and interviews. When possible, approval to conduct these observations was received from all parties involved at a minimum of two days in advance. Although the transition from being an external observer to that of an active participant posed potential risk, the resulting experience contributed significantly to this study. As recommended by Yin (2006), "the trade-offs between the opportunities and the problems have to be considered seriously in undertaking any participant-observation" (p. 113).

Archival Evidence

To further substantiate the findings, the researcher compared the results of the interviews and observations with existing evidence located within varying offices of the university. This evidence included, but was not limited to, existing (a) university fact books, (b) accreditation reports, (c) student satisfaction inventories, (d) university archives, (e) course syllabi, (f) marketing materials, and (g) university and committee meeting archives. The collection and analysis of this evidence was intended to lend further credibility to the findings of the study.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of the data was completed by utilizing thematic analysis to code the transcripts of the interviews, observations, and archival evidence. These themes represented identified patterns across the evidence that correlated to the research questions presented by the study. As new themes were identified, they either became new categories or were grouped within existing categories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2008; Saldana, 2009).

NVivo, a qualitative research software, was also utilized to supplement the manual coding process. Though this approach may appear redundant, the process of manually coding the transcripts resulted in a deeper understanding of the emerging themes and their connection to the theoretical underpinnings of the study. This knowledge was then used to organize the analytical framework within NVivo to further substantiate existing themes or identify those not yet uncovered.

As the collection of evidence developed, so did the process by which it was analyzed. Although the simultaneous process of collection and analysis was at times cumbersome, it was a distinct feature of qualitative research that proved quite beneficial to this study. As the transcription of the evidence became available, a preliminary review of the data was conducted to ascertain a general understanding of the content. This initial assessment of the data also provided the opportunity to further explore the relevancy of the information to the overall study (Creswell, 2008).

Once the initial assessment was conducted, the transcription was then coded. The first review added a predefined series of descriptive words and phrases to the margins. Once these descriptors were added to the document, a second review was then conducted to further categorize the patterns into a series of emerging themes based upon the established categories.

In an effort to further substantiate the findings of the study, attempts were made to interconnect the themes that were emerging from all of the sources of the evidence (Creswell, 2008).

The analysis of the observations occurred in a similar format. As each observation was conducted based upon emerging themes within the coded transcripts, these insights guided the researcher's decision about how to conduct the observations. More specifically, the researcher used the observations to listen to word choice within conversations or observe interactions between members of the organization's community (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). To accomplish this, Merriam (1998) recommended that it is important to transition attention between a wider and narrowed perspective of the environment. In doing so, the researcher was able to note the frequency and duration of activity, elements of conversation and interaction among members of the organization's community (p. 43). When completed, the observation notes were coded and compared with both the interview and archival evidence collected by the study.

It should also be noted that the narrative format of this study was responsible for delivering the findings to the audience. Therefore, it is imperative that the authenticity of the evidence remains intact. This was accomplished by further distinguishing the empirical evidence between findings that served as a description, an interpretation, and finally a judgment (Patton, 2002).

Chapter Summary

This chapter explored in greater detail the qualitative research design that was utilized to respond to the research questions presented by this study. It included a description of how evidence was gathered from participant interviews identified through purposeful sampling, coded, triangulated with archival evidence, and aligned with relevant theories of organizational change. The subsequent chapter will describe the analysis of data collected by the study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

In a conference room among the suite of offices used by members of the executive leadership of Point Park University, an energetic student about to embark upon her senior year with the Conservatory reflected for a moment about the future. After a short pause, she smiled and passionately stated that, “I’m a whole hearted believer in dreams and being open to the possibility of what is to come.”

Sixty years earlier, in that same office suite, a member of the executive leadership team of then Point Park College recalled that, “We basically dreamt some of Mr. Blum’s impossible dreams ... I would encourage him because I believed that if part of them came to fruition, this town would be improved” (Point Park College, 1985, p. 61).

Though they have never met, and are separated by time and perspective, these two individuals are representative of the inextricable link between the past and present culture of an organization. Despite the extensive growth and formalization within the Conservatory, the cultural characteristics exhibited today remain just as spirited as they were when the idea was first envisioned. The findings of this study will both illuminate these characteristics and provide a better understanding of how one organization was able to develop, lead, and assess the progress of significant organizational change. These characteristics have been brought to life through the narratives of seven faculty, four administrators, five students and two alumni who were members of the organization throughout the previous sixty years.

The collective voice of these twenty participants will address the following research questions:

1. Is the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University a learning organization?

If so, what evidence supports this assertion?

2. How did the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University infuse meaning, management, and measurement within its culture?
3. What organizational strategies enable the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?
4. What attitudes and/or beliefs enable members the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?

For the purposes this study, the data has been presented in the form of twelve descriptive vignettes. Each one explores a characteristic that has emerged from an analysis of interviews, observations and review of archival evidence collected during the course of the study. This approach was selected so that the reader could be connected with the identifiable characteristics of this organization's culture. When viewed in their totality, these vignettes illuminate the proverbial road map (Appendix I) that will provide a bearing for organizations embarking upon their own journeys of organization change.

Prologue: The Soup Was Boiling

(circa 1955)

One late Sunday evening I was returning to Pittsburgh and happened to be driving through downtown when I noticed the lights were on within one of our buildings. I stopped to turn them off because it is the thing one does when you're responsible for paying the bills. When I got inside, there was a class going on. In front of the room was none other than Frederic Franklin, Co-Founder and Artistic Director of the National Ballet in Washington, D.C. I of course walked over and introduced myself. During our conversation I politely asked why he was here? Freddie said that it was so boring in Washington on the weekends, so he thought he would come [to Point Park] as you have such wonderful students and he enjoyed teaching them. We never paid [Frederic] anything. Somehow the organization became a revolving door for many great performers. The greatest take away from this was that our efforts were being acknowledged by their presence on our campus. They all were very complimentary of our culture, students, and what we were trying to accomplish.

Administrator – Point Park College

In a musty conference room that has retained many of the characteristics of its past life as a signature hotel in the heart of downtown Pittsburgh, Michael, a faculty member, leaned back in his chair reflecting upon the early days of the Conservatory. His commanding voice, acquired through years of international choreography and dance, overpowered the background noise of the bustling city below. “The soup was boiling then.” This insightful reflection, accompanied by a hearty laugh and life-sized smile, were merely the foreshadowing of a journey this organization was embarking upon.

Point Park University was originally founded as the Business Training College in 1933 by Dr. Dorothy and L. Herbert Finkelhor. This newly formed proprietary school focused upon preparing its students for careers within the business world. Though recognition for its performing arts programs would come later, two significant events appear to have shifted the trajectory of the institution early on. The first event occurred in 1960 when the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania chartered the Business Training College as Point Park Junior College. This was significant because the institution would now be identified as a tax-exempt institution of higher education. The second event occurred six years later in 1966 when the junior college was then re-chartered as Point Park College. In doing so, the institution could begin awarding its students bachelor’s degrees.

If one would examine the typical maturation process of any institution of higher education, benchmarks such as these would appear normal. It is only when one correlates these events with evidence collected after the fact that their significance is illuminated. In the case of Point Park College, the shift from a proprietary school to a degree granting college was one of these moments. Thomas Grayson, an administrator during the ‘50s and ‘60s, noted “though the business training college had been in existence since 1934, our offerings did not fit the image of

higher education.” Complicating matters was the challenge of transitioning the institution from a proprietary entity to a non-profit organization. A few years earlier when Mr. Grayson approached the schools lawyers and accountants inquiring about what it would take to become both a non-profit and degree granting institution, the response he received was “that everyone agreed that there was no possible way in which we could convert to a non-profit organization.” What ultimately emerged from these conversations was a significant learning moment. Mr. Grayson recalled that “What I realized was that if you ask the wrong question, you’ll always get the wrong answer.” Somewhere the vision had been lost in the details of the process. The greater concern was not necessarily how to convert the existing entity into a non-profit organization, but more importantly how they could become one. Once this was realized, the first steps toward chartering the Business Training College as a non-profit institution of higher education would begin. Of even greater importance, the awareness of ensuring the organization was asking the right questions while advancing towards a desired vision emerged as a significant organizational characteristic.

The relevance of the transition from a proprietary entity to a non-profit degree granting institution not only shifted the way the college operated, but it established a core belief that would allow for the introduction of performing arts courses, and eventually programs, to the college’s offerings. Years later, reflecting upon the motivations behind the transition, Mr. Grayson revealed that “I believed then, as I do now, that a liberal arts education is the backbone of higher education. In fact, most of my early leadership was centered upon taking an essentially technical institution and seeking out opportunities to move us into a more liberal arts centered environment.” To accomplish this, the college began adding to their existing programs. Grayson continued, “With a little maneuvering and the addition of a few courses, we had enough students

to hire several English and History faculty to not only meet the Middle States requirements, but also enrich our programs making them more credible and transferable for our students.” It was around this time that members of the performing arts community also began to approach the institution with ideas and requests. When they did, Mr. Grayson recalled with a smile, “I was ready to listen!”

In support of both the newly developed liberal arts component and the desire to establish a presence within the local community, the young college shifted its focus outward. Mr. Grayson “spent a lot of energy developing our civic presence through participation in local boards that aligned with the vision of what we wanted to achieve.” Through these efforts it became known that the Pittsburgh Playhouse had been experiencing accreditation difficulties within their own programs. Realizing that Point Park could provide assistance given that both organizations now had mutual objectives “we extended the opportunity to have their students register for liberal arts courses at our institution. This partnership not only contributed to the growth our liberal arts focus, but also extended our reach within the surrounding community.” Years later, reflecting upon the beginning of this relationship Grayson revealed that “I had never dreamed about what it would ultimately become, but when the Pittsburgh Playhouse fell upon difficult times, I felt obligated not to the organization, but those twenty kids who would ultimately lose their funding. My idea at the time was to simply incorporate the program into our college.”

The importance of this relationship wasn’t fully realized until a short time later when ownership of the Playhouse was fully transferred to Point Park College. Having just received the keys to the property, and reflecting upon the earlier lesson related to asking the right questions, Grayson recalled that his line of inquiry centered upon how the college could further integrate the acquisition so that it aligned with the new liberal arts curriculum. “The idea that I presented

to our board was that we could take on all of the non-artistic functions that were draining the financially strapped organization. Since we already had enough students, we were able to create a Department of Theatre. Next thing you know we were in the theatre business!”

While the negotiations surrounding the Playhouse were occurring, an unrelated event occurred which demonstrated the organization’s ability to remain prepared for opportunities when they are presented. Then director of the newly formed Department of Theatre, Pete Mitchell, approached Mr. Grayson with an idea. An internationally recognized ballet dancer and choreographer, Michael Joseph, happened to be nearing the end of his time in the region and would be returning to his home country within the next few months. Rather than have this talented individual return to an unsettled country in the midst of a civil war, Mitchell suggested to Mr. Grayson that he join the college. Grayson recalled his initial skepticism. “We are not in the ballet business. We don’t even have such a program.” Despite these reservations, he agreed to meet with Mr. Joseph to explore the possibility. By the tone of their conversation, Grayson noted that, “Mr. Joseph believed that Pittsburgh was a place that really needed ballet. He passionately said that if we advertised, people would come. Ultimately, we struck a deal and placed a local advertisement. Well, the day the ad ran I by chance happened to look out of my office window. There below me was a line of mom’s and kids flowing out of the doors and wrapping around the building. In the end, we not only were able to acquire federal funding to further develop the concept, but once again we were able to align the energy surrounding this new opportunity with our vision of connecting the college to the local community through the liberal arts.”

Though the newly formed theatre and dance programs were off to a great start, focus upon the vision was never allowed to diminish. In fact, Grayson remembers clearly that, “Once

we had the structure of the curriculum in place, we turned our attention to our vocational commitment by thinking about where our students would find employment. In consideration of our civic responsibilities to the local community, we realized there didn't happen to be a dance company in the region. So we decided to form one. These efforts ultimately resulted in the development of the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.”

Leaning back in his chair for a moment Grayson smiled and said, “Those were very busy and hectic years.” Yet, as chaotic as it may have been he and other members of the organization remained committed to the strategic vision they had created. “The reason we did all of these things was because it was part of the dream. If you reflect upon any of our old catalogs, you'll find that our mission statement was a series of obligations that we owed to the community, our students, and ourselves.”

The Learning Organization

Traditionally, many organizational cultures adopt an outward focus upon extrinsic factors such as deadlines, challenges within the industry, or even the organization's own perceived limits to growth. What differentiates learning organizations from everyone else is a culture that has successfully shifted its focus inward and away from these extrinsic challenges. The result is an acknowledged emphasis placed upon intrinsic factors present within the members of the organization's community. When developed effectively, this approach elicits the needed individual and team thinking that contributes to a greater likelihood of success when undertaking significant change initiatives or navigating daunting challenges affecting an organization (Senge, 2006).

The characteristics that this inward focus settles upon occur naturally within humans. The challenge is that these characteristics are often suppressed as a result of a hyper focus upon

bottom line results of the organization. Senge and Garvin theorize that employees are not lacking the enthusiasm towards achievement, they just have a greater passion vested within the pursuit of their own personal visions. If an organization is able to bring the individual closer to the realization of their visions, the passion to also further the pursuit of the organization's objectives will be equally fervent (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, et al., 2008; Senge, 1999; Senge, 2006).

In support of this concept, the first question posed by this study sought to determine if the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University exhibits the typical characteristics of a learning organization. If it does, what evidence emerged that demonstrates that the culture harnesses an individual's commitment and capacity to engage in learning opportunities?

As the research progressed, several themes emerged that showed the Conservatory's culture did in fact exhibit identifiable behavioral characteristics that align with those of a learning organization. The most recognizable of these was a significance placed upon the value of an individual exhibiting both Soul and Authenticity. The presence of these two characteristics appears to not only establish the foundation upon which organizational learning could occur, they serve as the primer that awakens the attitudes and beliefs that emerge within the culture.

One notable challenge facing the Conservatory, however, is that these characteristics are predominately embraced by members of the Faculty, Administration and Alumni. With many students arriving as wide-eyed and passionate newcomers, the seasoned members of the organization believe these incoming students will ultimately develop these two characteristics as they both mature and navigate their way through their respective programs.

Vignette I: Soul

Movement is created through the collective understanding, experiences, and lessons learned throughout life. They're not just movements. Your movement is guided by who you are.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

When walking through the hallways of the Conservatory one will quickly notice that the collective personalities of its members are markedly different than what is found within a more traditional academic setting. The students, faculty, and administrators who bring the organization to life appear to exude a quiet, yet humble, confidence. So much so, when asked about the unique community within the Conservatory, several students noted that, “when you are out around town, you can always identify other members of the Conservatory ... they just have a certain personality.” This quiet confidence is not something that all students naturally exhibit when they first arrive. It is a characteristic that is purposefully exposed through an introspective approach to studying the performing arts.

To understand the origins of the phenomenon, you need to start at the beginning. Just as every faculty member had done earlier within their own careers, students arrive at the Conservatory with pure and unrefined talent. There is of course the exceptional student, but they are often few and far between. One faculty member observed that, “Kids don't understand that they are coming here to learn the art of cinema, dance and theatre. Often, they're simply buying into what is popular today. It takes a long time to break that down and teach them what they need to learn.”

Further compounding this effect is that students “are arriving more sophisticated, worldlier and better trained.” Though these newcomers arrive with tremendous physical attributes, they have not yet connected this raw talent with their soul. For example, a faculty member observed that, “new students will often pass me in the hall, drop their head and keep

walking. I have actually had meetings with this group to tell them to make eye contact with me and say hello. I might not yet be their teacher, but don't be afraid to say hi to me. I'm a human being. I will speak to you!"

This process of connecting the students' unrefined talent with their soul begins immediately. Believing that "the body is the expression of the mind", members of the faculty group develop their courses to purposely surface "[a student's] soul, their spirit, and their honesty. There is of course the technique and the mechanics behind our movement, but I need our students to dig a little deeper." Other members of the faculty agreed with this very idea. "Our society is often driven by what sells. What sells, however, is not always what is supposed to be. It is our role as educators to grow and develop our students without compromising the integrity of the students, the faculty, and our craft. Students are not here to simply earn a grade. They are here to develop their minds."

The surfacing of a student's soul can be correlated with a concept developed by Senge that was explored within the review of literature. Senge suggested envisioning a rubber band stretched between our hands symbolizes the creative tension between our personal visions and current reality. He theorized that typically one of two things would naturally occur. Students could relieve the tension by lowering the vision to align with the existing reality or they could improve upon the current reality so that it is raised to align with the new vision (Senge, 2006). Through the process of enabling the students to surface their artistic passions embedded within their souls, the faculty are able to channel the innate talent of the incoming students towards loftier visions. In doing so, the observed quiet confidence that is evident within seasoned members of the Conservatory's community slowly begins to develop. Reflecting upon this

growth one faculty member said that, “Watching the student grow from the child that they are when they arrive to the professional adult they become when they leave us is awesome!”

Vignette II: Authenticity

It’s about discovering your artistic voice. Finding what is inside you and pulling that out. I want to know who are you and what you have to say that will engage and change the way I am thinking.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

David Garvin theorized that learning organizations demand a certain level of openness and inquisitiveness. If an organization fails to embrace these characteristics, the community’s behavior will likely continue to be ruled by the status quo. As a result, an organization becomes noticeably lethargic and the pursuit of their mission is guided by very routine and mundane efforts (Garvin, 2000; Garvin, et al., 2008). To reverse this trend, organizations need to surface the inherent curiosity and desire to learn that exists within its members. This is only accomplished when individuals are able to authentically reflect upon their own personal visions, experiences and sources of motivation. Throughout the study, it became evident that members of the Conservatory’s community place a high value upon discovering one’s artistic voice through several avenues of reflection. This reflection is what enables the organization to surface what members are seeing and thinking, thus introducing new perspectives and pathways toward the pursuit of its mission.

Members of the faculty group attribute the characteristic of authenticity to the many years of auditions and experience within the industry. “In the performing arts you are asked to surrender everything to the process, sure you can have an ego, but ultimately you have to not only commit to the work, but more importantly, you have to commit to each other.” Several members of both the faculty and administration further reinforced this philosophy when they

each agreed that “[they] didn’t always need to be the smartest person in the room. [They] wanted to learn from everyone within the organization.”

One such example of this phenomenon really brings to life just how deeply rooted this aspect of the organization’s culture truly is. While gathered together outside of a performance studio waiting for a class to begin, one student offered up this noted piece of advice to a younger group of students. She said, “I encourage you as incoming students to be open minded and open hearted as you join our family.” When the students were asked to reflect upon the existence of this ethos, they seemed to acknowledge that their fellow student’s statement mirrored the philosophy of the faculty and administration. Not only did they agree, the students even went as far as saying that “the faculty and administration are so generous with sharing their experience with us.” In a later interview another student stated simply, “[The faculty and administration] are the right fit for our University.”

Summation of the Learning Organization

Without the presence of soul and authenticity within the organization, the characteristics of a learning organization would not have been fully realized. It was these two components which provided the foundation upon which a learning organization could develop within the Conservatory. While responding to a question relating to organizational strategies, one faculty exemplified these characteristics when they paused for a moment and recalled, “I actually began my career as a pre-law major as I wanted to be a lawyer. After talking to my advisor and really reflecting upon what I was truly passionate about, I changed my major to the performing arts. Sure, I could have been a successful lawyer and made much more money than I am now. I know deep inside, that if I did, I would be sitting in a law office somewhere today looking out the window wishing I was working in the performing arts.”

This ability to engage in an authentic reflection of one's true passion, soul, and motivation and then to subsequently share these experiences with others within the organization, appears to differentiate the Conservatory from other organizations. These phenomena strengthen their ability to bring forth an individual's commitment and capacity to engage in learning opportunities. Rising out of the existing characteristics of a learning organization were the elements of meaning, management, and measurement within the Conservatory's culture.

Establishing Meaning, Management and Measurement

Even as early as the 1950s, the leadership within Point Park College focused upon developing a widely accepted vision when creating what would eventually become the Conservatory of Performing Arts. This was accomplished by ensuring members of the college's community both understood and supported a clearly defined vision of what could be.

As the new endeavor developed into a more formalized entity within the college, the continued efforts were guided by what appeared to be very organic processes and procedures. To their advantage, the performing arts naturally required a certain amount of inherent preparation and discipline that carried over into the administrative and leadership aspects of the organization. These same characteristics also provided a natural means to assess the college's progress towards becoming what they envisioned as the center of cultural arts leadership within the region. The importance of utilizing both a personal and professional approach to assessing progress began to permeate the flourishing organization. This deliberate development of a clearly defined shared vision that was supported by specific action items and a means of measuring progress not only aligns with the concepts of meaning, management and measurement, but it addresses how the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University was able to infuse these three components within its culture (Garvin, et al., 2008).

Through extensive review of archival evidence, interviews and observations conducted with past and present members of the Conservatory, it became evident that the organization was able to effectively develop and sustain a powerful vision (meaning) by remaining focused upon the details of the process. They also took great advantage of the organic standards of performance inherent to the performing arts industry (management), while authentically measuring both personal and professional growth both individually and as an organization (measurement).

Vignette III: Vision

If we stay focused upon why we are here instead of our own agendas, then the vision takes care of itself, the mission takes care of itself, and we ultimately function in a healthy way.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

With the ambition to become the center of cultural leadership within its region, Point Park College set out upon a journey with nothing more than a shared vision and a desire to pursue it. Even with the steady physical growth of the campus and enrollment, the focus upon this vision appeared to remain constant throughout the next sixty years. This proved especially important with the addition of new curriculum, programs, and continued formalization that accompanied its growth.

One of the reasons why the Conservatory remained consistently focused upon this vision is attributed to the existence of a unique perspective within the culture. This ethos emerged when a faculty member was asked about how the Conservatory remained focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision amidst the hectic academic and performance commitments. They explained that, “The process is the result. So many people in life are results oriented, however, they fail to realize that the process of living their life or the choices they are making moment to

moment are the result.” As this was revealed, it became apparent that this subtle shift in perspective seemed to allow members of the organization to remain focused upon the details that matter rather than being overwhelmed with the many challenges encountered in pursuit of the larger vision.

This clarity and focus upon the details of the process also emerged as a theme within interviews among students. They noted that members of the faculty and administration were very upfront with their expectations for students. They would say such things as “Here is what is going on right now” and “Here is what you can expect next.” As a follow-up to this question, the students were asked if their experiences aligned with what was described to them before they committed to joining the Conservatory. Their responses were not only aligned, but were also quite emphatic. “Yes! Our experiences are pretty much right in line with what they told us it was going to be like, except maybe a little more challenging.”

The enduring strength of a shared vision provides a significant waypoint in both the development of an organization’s culture as well as their ability to effectively manage organizational change. In reflecting upon the opening sequence of this chapter, it becomes evident that the Conservatory had effectively rooted their vision within the culture. As evidenced by archival data, a student about to embark upon her senior year had shared essentially the same vision for her future as did the senior leadership of Point Park College sixty years earlier when speaking about an entity that was nothing more than an idea.

Vignette IV: Organic

The Performing Arts are organically accountable. What you see on stage results from the students' education and training.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

The culture woven throughout the performing arts organically creates standards that foster continual movement towards the pursuit of an ever-improving vision of artistic excellence. It is essential to note that the emphasis within this last statement is centered upon the word “continual”. A member of the faculty group offered the following example that further explained the essence of this phenomenon. “What happens in our craft is that every day someone like Mikhail Baryshnikov rises to prominence within the performing arts. As a result of their incredible talent, the standards for everyone else are naturally elevated. In a short period of time, the audience comes to expect this new level of performance from everyone no matter who you are.”

This ongoing progression toward ever improving standards of performance across all genres of performing arts develops an organic call to action within organizations such as the Conservatory. Throughout the course of the study both students and faculty have stated that they are, by nature of the industry, “driven to compete with each other on the same level.” This organic leveling effect inherent to the performing arts industry provides organizations such as the Conservatory an environment that shields its members from encroaching mediocrity. What results is a culture that remains focused upon perfecting their craft while remaining resistant to disturbances that pull their focus away from the pursuit of an established vision. The result of this focus is an observable behavior that is exhibited within the organization that has been described by its members as “a certain level of confidence amongst everyone.”

Vignette V: Growth

Though the performing arts are driven by critics, in reality, they are not that important. What is important is what you really have. What you understand. What you can really do.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

Just as the methods of management within performing arts organizations tend to be very organic, so are the means of ongoing assessment that measure progress towards an established vision. Where organizations such as the Conservatory are able to differentiate themselves is through a dual approach to measuring progress. Though comparisons with aspirational models are utilized, of equal importance is the growth experienced at the personal and professional levels by members of the organization. As with many things within the performing arts, this is accomplished through a very introspective approach to assessment and evaluation.

Where many organizations are focused upon developing a results orientated environment, the Conservatory measures progress by the growth that is experienced throughout a given course, semester or academic year. Several members of the faculty group explained the importance of providing “the students’ with a microcosm of the real world. We measure success by where they are at the beginning compared to the end of a given course. Even if they are not getting casted in a performance, we are always attempting to shift their focus towards the larger question of have they progressed as an artist?” This deliberate focus upon short-term growth ensures that the students and the organization remain focused upon the actual moments within the journey. As a result, they are not only better able to evaluate progress towards a desired goal, they are also able to more effectively identify and benefit from learning moments when they appear.

Though all of the students who were included within the study noted, “that they are constantly getting up in front of their peers and professors”, the study revealed a unique ethos that is hidden within the Conservatory’s culture. The frequent critique received by the students

within their classes and studios is not viewed as the final assessment of their progress. Several students noted that they collected the feedback that was provided by their faculty and peers, and subsequently used the knowledge to support a thoughtful self-evaluation of their own progress. One student said that they would often ask themselves questions that centered upon, “Did I meet my own expectations? How do I feel about a given performance? Am I happy with the effort that I gave? Am I at the level that I need to be?” Another student even went as far as saying that they “often don’t measure progress on a given day. If I am engaged and I am truly 100% focused, then I am learning and I will be making progress.”

Summation of Meaning, Management and Measurement

The Conservatory is exhibiting the espoused belief that “results are measured as both a personal and professional assessment” between two definite points of time within close proximity of each other. Even more important than this belief is that the results of this ongoing evaluation are internalized and used in a very introspective way. One member of the faculty group explained this idea eloquently when they said that “there will always be an intense level of competition amongst members of the Conservatory, however, growth as a person or as an artist will always be measured in a very personal way.”

Surfacing Organizational Strategies

Organizations that exhibit a natural willingness and courage to chart a path towards a desired vision often do so with strategies that are fully embraced within the organization’s community. As Keaton theorized, no one person or team is omnipotent. Every member of an organization by virtue of their daily interaction contributes to the development and sustainability of the larger entity (Keaton, 2005). This ethos enabled the emergence of a set of organizational

strategies that allowed the Conservatory of Performing Arts to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose.

The development of the Conservatory is really the story of a shared vision guided by three visible and interrelated organizational strategies. The first strategy, the importance of humanity, ensured that above all else the organization was not just a place to discover the performing arts, but to develop the characteristics we aspire to see within humanity. This belief supported the second strategy that centered upon relationships within and outside of the organization. From its onset, the Conservatory had a very family-like feeling within its culture. This has remained both intact and fiercely protected as the organization evolved throughout the years. Lastly, the organization passionately celebrates diversity. Similar to varying genres within the performing arts, the Conservatory embraces a wide range of artistic styles and techniques as well as the many unique cultures and personalities that its members represent.

Vignette VI: Humanity

I might not be able to make them all great performers, but I will make them great human beings.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

The existence of a genuine sense of compassion for other members of the organization resonates powerfully throughout the Conservatory. The fact that this phenomenon surfaced within both interviews and observations across all participant roles in the study hinted at the strategic significance it carries within the organization. Members of both the faculty and administration have described their tenure with the Conservatory as having a distinct sense of familiarity. In particular, one member of the faculty group noted “I feel at home. I feel connected to the environment, the culture and the organizational community as a human being and not just an employee.”

In an industry that thrives on the competitive pursuit of perfection, this organizational strategy would seem to diminish the natural drive to compete at the highest levels. In reality, it only strengthens the bond among members of the Conservatory's community. A member of the administration captured the essence of this idea after reflecting for a moment about the presence of humanity within the performing arts. "I don't know how not to care for other members of the university community. In the grand scheme of things we are all human beings." They continued, "I believe that humanity has to come first and the remainder will accompany it if you are a healthy soul."

Several members of the faculty group echoed these words when reflecting upon their role in developing their students' talent. "As an educator, one of the things that I feel most proud of is that I am one of the faculty members that have warmed our students' lives." Another faculty member stated that, "It is such an enjoyable experience for me to see them overcome their physical obstacles, their mental obstacles, and to watch them grow as human beings first and then professionals in their field."

Even within an environment dependent upon the competitive pursuit of artistic excellence, the Conservatory has rooted its organizational strategies within the development of compassionate human beings. "The students will always have the drive to compete. What I try to do is to get them to support each other in that pursuit. Yes, they are still competing, but in reality, they are competing with themselves." For the students who work closely with members of the faculty group, this lasting impression has taken hold. So much so that one member of the student group said unreservedly that, "I have such a special place in my heart for our faculty."

Vignette VII: Relationships

We are not networking ... We are building relationships.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

When thinking about the descriptors that characterize the culture within performing arts organizations, most often adjectives such as competitive or demanding surface frequently. Though descriptors such as these were included among the responses of participants of the study, one adjective took a more prominent role. When asked to describe the culture within the Conservatory, the word that was most frequently used by those interviewed was “Family”.

From an outsider’s perspective, it would only stand to reason that typical descriptors such as competition, challenging, and demanding are regularly invoked. Often these mental images are acquired through the stories shared by the members of the community who have shed light upon the details of the significant number of hours spent perfecting their craft. Missing from these narratives, however, are the underlying relationships forged by a constant pursuit of a defined standard of performance. This element of the Conservatory’s culture is noticeable enough that even newest members of the Conservatory recognize early on that “performing arts programs are really akin to families. So much so, that these relationships and human behaviors are quite visible.” This aspect of the organization’s culture is not something new. In fact, a member of the faculty group, who is also an alumnus of the Conservatory, noted that, “The organization always had a family feel to it. Even today it feels like a hard scrabbled group of artists making theatre, teaching classes, contributing to university life and the local community.”

The importance of “building relationships” and not simply “networking” with other members of the Conservatory is a deliberate strategy established by the organization. Each of the participants within the study conveyed the importance of developing a personal connection with

a colleague in lieu of simply becoming acquaintances to further advance the pursuit of personal or organizational goals. One member of the faculty group believes this strategy has become so engrained within the culture because “You’re close to each other. You’re close to the material and the projects. You have to become comfortable with being vulnerable, learn to take risks and most importantly learn how to communicate. All of these things contribute to that feeling of family.” Expressing a very similar sentiment, one student mirrored this belief but added the idea that “performing arts programs let you discover and interact with others in a way that is not shared within other programs. You learn quickly how to work with both the positive and negative aspects of human behavior.”

Vignette VIII: Diversity

We are very lively and loud group, yet at the same time, a welcoming and open hearted and open-minded community.

Student – Conservatory of Performing Arts

The performing arts organically bring forth a range of thoughts and emotions that are brought to life through a variety of artistic genres. Just as these visceral experiences engage audiences in a multitude of ways, the organizational strategy of celebrating diversity within the Conservatory has contributed to the development of the great breadth and depth of experience and leadership within the organization.

Throughout the study, students, faculty and administrators commented about the wide range of techniques and genres that are explored within the Conservatory. One faculty member explained that the benefit of such diversity is that it “engages our students in such a way that they must confront topics, techniques and genres that are both personally and professionally challenging.” To ensure this aspect of the organization remains consistent, members of the faculty group, many of whom are working artists, are frequently auditioning, performing and

seeking out opportunities to further refine their craft. In doing so, the diverse expertise within the Conservatory is continually being refreshed.

Though the effects of this diverse environment upon personal and professional development remains relevant, one member of the faculty group revealed a notable facet of this culture. When speaking about how the organization remains focused upon a shared vision, they paused for a moment and stated that, “Though our diversity does periodically create significant tension, maybe one of the reasons we have been able to remain focused upon our mission and vision so effectively is actually because of our diverse backgrounds, ideas and experience.” In reflecting upon this statement from a systemic viewpoint, this idea begins to carry significant weight with respect to organizational change and the development of a culture. The performing arts industry will naturally continue to establish the standards of performance with respect to the techniques inherent to the various genres. The mission of the Conservatory therefore remains focused upon developing the breadth and depth of talent within its members. With this in focus, the pursuit of the mission, vision or objectives of a given change initiative are not reliant upon the more traditional processes and formalized structure of a conventional organization. Greater value appears to be placed upon the diverse range of collective experience and skills set exhibited by members of the Conservatory’s faculty, administrators, alumni and students.

Summation of Organizational Strategies

The philosophies that have surfaced within the Conservatory’s community have supported the emergence of a set of organizational strategies that enable them to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose. These ideals were observed through the development of humanity, placing a high value upon relationships, and celebrating the breadth and depth of diversity within the organization. Collectively, these strategies have provided the

framework for both the development and sustainability of the Conservatory as well as the unique set of attitudes and beliefs exhibited within the organization.

Illuminating Attitudes and Beliefs

Recalling the idea posited by Denning (2004), that as humans “analysis might excite the mind, but it hardly offers a route to the heart. That is where you must go if you are to motivate people not only to take action but to do so with energy and enthusiasm” (p. 123). The pathway to the heart of the Conservatory’s strategies was illuminated by the emergence of a unique set of attitudes and beliefs exhibited by its members. When looking at this set of attitudes and beliefs, it becomes apparent that they not only align with the organizational strategies, but they each represent a direct link to an individual’s authenticity and soul.

In speaking with and observing members that represent the Conservatory’s journey over the past sixty years, there is an undisputable presence of both passion and grit focused upon the continual pursuit of personal, professional and organizational goals. Balancing this determined effort is a subtle, but equally hearty, sense of appreciation and humility. Together, these four elements have empowered members of the organization with the willingness and courage to continue even when the path was not yet clear. One member of the faculty group perhaps said it best when they stated, “The most important message that I tell my students is to work hard, never give up, and believe in yourself. If you can do that you will be successful.”

Vignette IX: Passion

The only boundaries are the ones that you set yourself.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

As the success of any organization rests squarely upon the shoulders of its members, reliance upon pure talent or know-how will often deliver short-term results. Conversely, sustained success is achieved by surfacing the passion residing within members of the

organization. When the participants of the study were asked to describe their source of motivation, each of their responses either began or concluded with “a passion for the performing arts.”

This passion exhibited by members of the performing arts community was even surfaced by members of the extended university community. When asked to describe members of the Conservatory, they often said that as a whole “they are incredibly passionate and enormously dedicated to their craft.” The source of this great passion within the Conservatory’s culture emerged early and often throughout the study. As one member of the faculty group explained, “Life is too short. You have to go with your passion. Sure I could have been a good lawyer but would that have made me happy?” This authentic reflection captures the essence of why members of the organization remain committed to both the pursuit of their craft as well as the shared vision even when faced with adversity. Another member of the faculty group summed this up eloquently when they stated that, “I feel like I have given my blood, sweat and tears to this organization. Yes, at times it has been a challenge, but most of the time it has been a labor of love.”

The same passion is also exhibited through the visible work ethic of the students. One senior administrator within the university community cited the following example. “What we hear from producers, choreographers, and directors from around the country all the time is the work ethic of our students and alumni. They’re willing to spend the hours preparing and standing in line with 200 other people to audition and get rejected 98% of the time. They’re willing to endure this in order to be successful in this industry. Someone without passion is not going to stand in line with all those other people for another failed audition!”

A similar example was both observed and surfaced within the interviews regarding students arriving early and prepared for class. Several faculty members noted that, “I would start rehearsal at 7 a.m. and my students would be there at 6:30 a.m.” When the students were asked what allowed them to endure such a rigorous academic and performance schedule and remain engaged, their collective response was both clear and evident, “What keeps me going is my passion.”

Vignette X: Grit

Our class was performing combinations one day and many of the students were doing double pirouettes. The faculty member leading the class stopped us all exclaiming “No! No! No! ... I told you to do triple pirouettes... Don’t give yourself the option of doing a double.

Student – Conservatory of Performing Arts

During one of the interviews a faculty member quoted a line from Shakespeare’s Hamlet that says, “There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” The faculty member paused for a moment before continuing, “With anything in life, it’s really all about the attitude that you bring to it.” The essence of this philosophy is rooted within the opening sequence as the faculty member is encouraging their students not to give themselves the option of doing double pirouettes when they need to be doing triples.

Seasoned members of the performing arts community have developed a resilient attitude as a result of their many years working within the industry. Though success is accompanied by great visibility, the hours of perfecting one’s craft and failed auditions are an equally important part of the journey. It is this rite of passage that develops the grit and determination that is evident within the Conservatory’s culture, not the resulting moments in the spotlight. “When you consider the performing arts industry, most people will tell you that its members are generally the hardest working, most team oriented, get it done, gritty people. This environment develops

these attributes and characteristics.” This important observation by one university administrator captured the very characteristics that faculty members passionately instill within their students.

Throughout many of the interviews, members of the faculty group couldn’t stress enough the importance of understanding that, “it is all about really wanting something and believing in it.” They believe that if that attitude exists, “I don’t know that you can fail.” The reasoning behind this ethos is that, “if I care enough I’m not going to fail. There is something inside of me that ignites. There’s a fire. A fight.”

The challenge facing the Conservatory is that this characteristic is not always developed within newer members of the student body. Incoming students often arrive with a great sense of passion and drive, but when they encounter their first bit of adversity they have a tendency to pause and take a step back. The Conservatory uses these moments as a great learning opportunity. One member of the faculty group explained that “In order to make progress or gain anything you have to take a risk. You have to risk failure. You have to risk being embarrassed, having a stupid idea or maybe not being the smartest person in the room.” Learning moments such as these are encouraged within the organization because the culture has placed such a high value upon a closely connected network of peers. This network has resulted in the prevailing belief that, “failing and having great mentors has really allowed me to hone my vision. It made me aware that you don’t have to know everything and that things don’t have to always be finished and perfect.”

The transformation that develops within a student that provides the requisite qualities to overcome adversity and summoning the courage to do so does take time. Faculty members often begin by instilling the idea within their students that “failing doesn’t mean things are over, it’s simply a redirection.” One faculty member even went as far as passionately exclaiming, “Flip It!

Be one of the ones we cast. Don't walk in thinking, 'I hope they like me'. If you walk in that way I'm not going to like you. Flip It! Empower yourself! Walk into the room and be one of the ones we're looking for." Even when students begin to realize they have control over the outcome, the supportive environment continues to persist.

The effect of this supportive environment has a significant impact upon the emotional growth of the students. For example, one sophomore member of the Conservatory who was about to begin his second year was surprised by the increase of their own level of perseverance. Reflecting upon this growth, he recalled that just in the course of the last year the incoming class has, "acquired perseverance and determination from our classes and humility and humbleness from our teachers. When you combine this with our natural confidence it often creates natural leadership. We're no longer afraid of the everyday challenges."

Vignette XI: Appreciation

An English professor approached me once and asked, why do your students applaud at the end of your class? After reflecting for a moment, I replied that it is the students' way of saying thank you. Quizzically, the English professor stated that nobody ever applauds at the end of my English courses? Well, it has become tradition that all of my students applaud and give me a hug before they leave at the conclusion of all of my courses.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

Complementing the profound passion and grit exhibited by members of the Conservatory is a deeply rooted sense of appreciation. By itself, this characteristic might not emerge as being noteworthy. However, what appears to make this organization unique is that this characteristic is not bound to the traditional vertical or horizontal structure of the Conservatory. For example, when members of the faculty, administration, students and alumni were asked to describe the impact other members of the Conservatory have had upon their success, their responses were almost identical. Nearly all of the students within the study echoed the sentiments of one

student's thoughts, "Everyday I have the opportunity to observe and perform with so many wonderfully talented students and faculty."

Members of the Faculty and Administration expressed similar beliefs to that of the students. One senior administrator believes that, "The organization is filled with a bunch of creative and talented people, and it is our responsibility to support both faculty and students whatever way I can." Though the competition can be grueling and the realities of the industry can be difficult to accept, this atmosphere of mutual respect and appreciation appears to develop a prevailing belief that members of the Conservatory have the opportunity to be "living their dreams... and you can't ask for anything more than that!" A member of the faculty group captured the essence of this characteristic when they said that, "It is incredibly fulfilling to work with a young artist and have the opportunity to see them go on and have success."

Vignette XII: Humility

In theatre you are asked to surrender everything to the process, sure you can have an ego, but ultimately you have to commit to the work and the other people.

Faculty – Conservatory of Performing Arts

When considering the typical attitudes and beliefs that enable members of an organization to remain focused upon a shared vision, it is not often that the collective community exhibits an espoused value. This characteristic was most evident amongst participants when they were given the opportunity to contribute additional perspectives at the conclusion of the interview. Often, their responses either began with or included the words "I truly feel blessed."

The purity of this attitude was captured by a member of the faculty group who expressed that, "The Conservatory is not a place for me to be center stage, or my craft to be center stage, but it is a place that I feel I can make a formative contribution as a team member." As a follow-up question to further explore this phenomenon, participants were asked if the critics or their

reviews permeated this aspect of their culture given the perceived influence and significance they hold within the performing arts industry. The responses only further supported the strength of this characteristic within the organization's community. One faculty captured the essence of this when they said that "In our craft you are of course dependent upon the reviews written by critics. If they believe you are good, sure you tend to believe what they say. Though you do gain more confidence in yourself, you don't really become big headed as a result of their feedback."

Summation of Attitudes and Beliefs

The group of attitudes and beliefs that emerged from this study serves as the energy which fuels the unrelenting drive towards the shared vision created by members of the Conservatory. It should come as no surprise that these four attitudes also very neatly align with the strategies that have been adopted by the organization. What results is a culture that remains very balanced during periods of organizational change or growth. As long as the organization is able to continue to nurture the passion, grit, humility and appreciation within its members, their ability to effectively develop, lead and assess organizational change will endure.

Chapter Summary

Each of the previously described vignettes explored a characteristic that has emerged from the interviews, observations and review of archival evidence collected during the course of the study. These stepping-stones represent the proverbial road map that can serve as the compass for organizations embarking upon their own journeys of organization change. Where many theories typically separate and associate these human characteristics with smaller elements of organizational change, the findings of this study have placed them within their rightful position on center stage.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study set out to document a significant change initiative that resulted in the development of an organization and its culture. Though the scholarly literature is replete with an immense amount of knowledge related to the subject, what appears to be missing is the proverbial road map that an organization can follow to increase the likelihood of success when developing, leading, and assessing the progress of significant organizational change. This study brought forth the purposeful strategies, attitudes and beliefs, and characteristics of members of an organization that underwent a significant change. This journey took the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University from a mere vision to that of an internationally recognized organization in the span of sixty years. The conclusions presented within this chapter not only answer the research questions presented by this study, but illuminate the path taken by this organization.

Answering the Research Questions

Research Question 1: Learning Organization

Is the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University a learning organization? If so, what evidence supports this assertion?

Discussion. The findings of this study have determined that the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University can be considered a learning organization. Though this concept would not enter the lexicon for another twenty-five years, the identifiable characteristics associated with such organizations were present within the Conservatory's culture as early as the 1950's. The development of these characteristics was attributable to the existence of two notable

human characteristics that ensured the ethos of the organization embodied the soon to be principles of a learning organization.

The first of these characteristics is soul. Members of the Conservatory interviewed for this study, both past and present, surfaced the idea that artistic movement is not simply an artist creating theatre or dance. In fact, it is an expression of their mind created from an understanding of one's cumulative experiences and lessons learned throughout life. This idea speaks directly to the capacity of the organization's members to not only clarify their own personal visions, but to explore with genuine curiosity the perspectives of others.

The second of these characteristics is Authenticity. When the lights are dimmed and the curtains are drawn, members of the conservatory often turn inward for a moment of reflection. The voice that they hear is not the words penned by a critic, but that of their own voice rising from quiet contemplation. Members of the Conservatory have placed a significant value upon discovering and surfacing one's own artistic voice. It is the sum of these reflections that creates learning moments, transfers knowledge and helps sustain the systemic perspective amongst members of the organization.

These two important characteristics have enabled the Conservatory to develop and sustain a culture that values learning. Where many organizations seek individuals because they are a right fit for a particular role, the Conservatory prefers to seek out individuals that display a high level of authenticity and soul. That subtle difference has resulted in an organization that is able to manage organizational change successfully by integrating newly acquired knowledge within its community.

Links to Theory. Even before the Conservatory became a recognized entity, members within the university community were committed to fully engaging their capacity to create the

future they had envisioned. This was accomplished through a desire to seek out and capitalize upon the opportunities they identified which aligned with their clearly defined shared vision. To support that journey, the Conservatory was also able to successfully establish thoroughly defined guidelines for action (management) as well as appropriate methods of assessment (measurement) to determine the progress of both the organization and its members towards its stated vision.

These efforts resulted in the development of what Senge and Garvin categorized as the five recognizable characteristics of learning organizations. Though each scholar respectively focused upon either a theoretical or practical application, the study revealed an organization that has infused each of the elements within its culture. For the purposes of review, the following is the proposed alignment of the characteristics of a learning organization according to Senge and Garvin introduced within Chapter 2:

Table 1

Proposed Alignment of Garvin’s and Senge’s Characteristics of Learning Organizations

<u>David Garvin</u>	<u>Peter Senge</u>
Learning from Experience	Personal Mastery
Learning from Others	Team Learning
Experiment with New Approaches	Mental Models
Transfer of Knowledge	Shared Vision
Systemic Problem Solving	Systems Thinking

Beginning with Senge’s concept of Personal Mastery, members of the Conservatory frequently engage in an authentic assessment of their personal development in comparison with existing standards of performance from the performing arts industry (Senge, 1994). This process of honestly evaluating their progress enables members of the organization to more effectively seek out the specific learning opportunities that will most benefit their growth. This process within Garvin’s framework is identified as Learning from Experience. Though the concept is

titled differently, the objective of systematically measuring oneself relative to an intended goal is the same (Garvin, 2000). The result of these efforts will identify where progress must occur in order to reach a desired future state. It is the sum of these efforts that propelled the organization towards fulfilling its Conservatory's mission.

This authentic reflection also serves another significant purpose for members of the organization. It surfaces the passions and beliefs embedded within its members souls. When these internal pictures, or mental models as defined by Senge (1994), are surfaced, they are often shared within the organization's community. This process results in the further development of understanding of events within both the Conservatory and the performing arts community. Garvin's experimenting with new approaches furthered this very principle. If members of the Conservatory solely focused upon a few perspectives in lieu of celebrating their diverse experience, they would not have cultivated the great breadth and depth of talent represented within their organization (Garvin, 2000).

The celebration of diversity has also established the presence of team learning within the Conservatory. Senge (1994) defines this concept as "transforming conversational and collective thinking skills, so that groups of people can reliably develop intelligence and ability greater than the sum of the individual members' talent" (p. 6). This very idea takes center stage with every rehearsal or performance. Though the star may end up in the spotlight, it is the full cast and crew that are responsible for success at the end of the night.

These first three elements collectively support the development of a shared vision within the organization. The importance of this characteristic within the development of the Conservatory was illustrated within the opening sequence of Chapter 4. The mere fact that a current member of the Conservatory described the vision for the upcoming year in almost exactly

the same words as a member of the university's leadership sixty years earlier is profound. The sense of commitment within the organization's community to move in unison towards a shared vision enabled the Conservatory to remain focused while navigating challenges within the performing arts industry as well as those standing in the way of its own growth (Senge, 1994). Garvin further theorized that an increase of commitment to a shared vision often results in increased cohesiveness within an organization (Garvin, 2000). The Conservatory's family like atmosphere is a clear example of this concept.

The last characteristic of a learning organization that is exhibited within the Conservatory is that of systems thinking. Though the concepts are relatively similar, Garvin elected to title his characteristic systemic problem solving. This idea explains how an individual is able to see change occurring within an organization and beyond, and respond in a manner that remains aligned with the larger shared vision of an organization. Garvin furthers this idea by noting the importance of seeing what is actually occurring within the organization as opposed to reliance upon anecdotal evidence (Garvin, 2000; Senge, 1994). To the advantage of the Conservatory, this concept is an inherent characteristic of the performing arts. Though ongoing assessment of personal and organizational growth is occurring, members of the Conservatory are always reflecting and striving towards standards of artistic performance that are established within the varying genres of the performing arts. As a result, the organization has developed a natural systemic point of view.

Research Question 2: Meaning, Management, Measurement

How did the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University infuse meaning, management, and measurement within its culture?

Discussion. The Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University has successfully infused meaning, management, and measurement within its culture. This was accomplished as a result of two significant occurrences within the early years of the organization. The first event was the deliberate belief amongst members of the college's leadership in the early 1950s that even if the organization achieved part of their dream, the impact upon its sphere of influence would be significant. By clearly establishing and pursuing the shared vision of becoming a non-profit degree granting institution rooted within the liberal arts, the organization began to break down existing mental models and replace them with a culture that was more conducive to learning, reflection and the exploration of new knowledge and ideas. This focus not only enabled the Conservatory to remain committed to these lofty aspirations, it ensured that its members' efforts were undergirded with significant meaning and purpose. Only when this began to occur was the organization able to begin to integrate methods of management and measurement.

As meaning began to permeate the organization's culture, a second event surfaced organically through characteristics inherent to the performing arts. Where many organizations must develop and implement both a formal management structure with accompanying methods of assessment and evaluation, these aspects tended to occur naturally within the varying genres of the performing arts. As an example, when the college first developed the Department of Theatre, they relied upon existing standards of artistic excellence widely accepted within the industry. Therefore, the question was not a matter of what or how things needed to be done, but who would provide the leadership to meet these expectations. That answer arrived in the form of visiting artists and faculty who were either donating their time or teaching full time within the Conservatory. As many of these individuals have extensive experience or were currently

working within their respective genres, they already possessed the know-how to develop and teach the requisite courses that would prepare their students and the organization to meet the existing levels of artistic excellence within the industry.

The Conservatory also relied upon the experience of these same individuals to develop appropriate methods of measuring progress toward established standards of artistic excellence. As the performing arts industry relies heavily upon critiques of ongoing rehearsals and performances, members of this community are accustomed to both receiving and providing evaluations of performances and professional growth. Even more relevant is the fact that members of this community ensure time is allotted to use these more public evaluations to support their own personal evaluations of their professional growth. The cumulative effect of these inherent qualities provided the foundation upon which the Conservatory was not only able to infuse meaning, management, and measurement within their culture, but to sustain these qualities as the organization matured.

Links to Theory. The infusion of meaning, management, and measurement within the Conservatory's culture was a deliberate and carefully planned process. These elements emerged from the cultivation of the right organizational strategies, management techniques and attitudes and beliefs exhibited by members of the organization's community.

Much of the early success of the Conservatory resulted from the ability of the organization to create an environment that was conducive to learning. In the early 1950s, members within the college's community had a tendency to surface existing mental models of what was and was not possible. According to Garvin (2008), an organization can overcome these challenges if they are able to set aside time to reflect upon the current reality while openly exploring opportunities that are in front of the organization. This can only occur, however, if

members of the organization possess and utilize the requisite skills to do so. As was evidenced within the study, Grayson acknowledged that a great majority of his leadership efforts were focused upon guiding the organization through this transition.

One visible outcome of the transformation from a technical culture to one that reflects the traditions of a liberal arts focus is a deep sense of purpose and meaning within the organization's community. As this newly developed vision continued to coalesce with opportunities within the performing arts industry, the requisite operational guidelines (management) began to be identified by members of the organization's leadership. What resulted was the introduction of organizational processes and procedures that align with the five characteristics of a learning organization as defined by both Senge and Garvin (Garvin, et al., 2008; Senge, 1994; Senge, 1999). This formalization also resulted in an increased emphasis upon continuous improvement supported by a desire to surface and share new knowledge and perspectives within the Conservatory's culture.

Though the third component of measurement can also be considered inherent to the performing arts, Garvin (2000) did theorize that there are typically three stages embedded within this element. First, members of the organization begin to think differently as they are introduced to new ideas. For the Conservatory, this began to occur when the barriers of transitioning to a degree granting non-profit organization were removed. Only then did members of the organization begin to see the transition might be possible. Secondly, the behavior of members within the organization changes when they begin to internalize the acquired knowledge. This second phase became visible as members of the larger organizational community began changing their existing mental models through dialogue. This occurred when pathways to becoming a true liberal arts institution of higher education were legitimately explored in meetings around

campus. The last phase, performance improvement, is marked by measurable improvements within the organization. This was fully realized when the college began to offer courses within the performing arts, aligned with the Pittsburgh Playhouse, and hired the additional English and History faculty to further develop the depth and breadth of their academic programs (Garvin, et al., 2008).

Research Question 3: Organizational Strategies

What organizational strategies enable the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?

Discussion. To begin to understand the culture of an organization, a systemic exploration of their organizational strategies is needed. In the case of the Conservatory, three very unique strategies have enabled the organization to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose. Just as the Conservatory was founded upon a set of human ideals, the characteristics of humanity, relationships and diversity have guided their strategic efforts throughout the past sixty years.

As the interviews and observations progressed, it became evident that members of the Conservatory genuinely respected and cared for each other. What makes this strategy so unique is that this very same culture supports a tremendously competitive artistic environment. The reason that these elements are able to coexist is attributable to an existing philosophy centered upon the idea that competition is really about personal and professional growth. The strategic importance of emphasizing humanity is that the combination of this competitive environment, and the characteristics which define who we are, enable members of the Conservatory to push through the physical, mental and unforeseen challenges encountered during their time with the organization.

Emerging from the fusion of the human and competitive elements is a lasting bond that unites and strengthens members of the organization. This bond represents the second organizational strategy that is centered upon the relationships among members of the organization. Many of the participants included within the study expressed the importance of building relationships with their colleagues. These cohesive relationships not only enabled the organization to communicate and respond quickly to challenges or changes within their environment, they allowed for a deepened and more authentic celebration of diversity to occur within their culture.

As the relationships within the Conservatory strengthened over time, the celebration of diversity took on a strategic importance within the organization. Where many organizations consider diversity an aspect of the human resource department, the Conservatory cultivates, explores, and uses the diversity of its members as an organizational asset. This is often expressed through the wide array of cultural, religious, ethnic and artistic backgrounds and perspectives not only within the classroom, but within the administrative and leadership aspects of the organization. When woven together, the range of diversity within this eclectic community strengthens the fabric upon which the shared vision and purpose is imprinted.

Links to Theory. When seeking to understand how an organization's strategy was developed, the investigation must occur through a systemic frame of reference. This idea not only embodies one of core principles of systems theory, but also will allow for a greater understanding of the more detailed aspects of an organization's culture. The strategic importance of humanity, relationships and diversity within the Conservatory represents this systemic approach. The maturation of this organization, its culture and its ability to navigate change has been, and will continue to be, dependent upon these three strategies.

The reason these strategies emerged within the Conservatory can be correlated with Karl Weick's theory of a loosely coupled system. One of the ideas emerging from this particular study is that the Conservatory surfaces and celebrates the many differences found within the organization. Yet at the same time, it is these differences that are concentrated, reflected upon and channeled towards the singular pursuit of a shared vision within the organization. Weick (1976) describes this type of organization as loosely coupled, or a system that has "a situation in which elements are responsive, but that each one preserves its own identity" (p. 3). This preservation of identity by members of the organization removes the typical cause and effect relationship found within many organizations. In its place is a more responsive community with heightened sensitivity to the internal and external environments of the Conservatory.

This responsive community of members within the Conservatory developed due to the advantages afforded to a loosely coupled system. Most notably is the ability of its members to act as a sensing mechanism for the organization. Within more traditional reactive systems, members of the organization base responses to changes within their environment purely upon the values and beliefs of the larger organization. Members of a loosely couple system, however, also take into consideration their own perspectives as an isolated element within a larger system. This difference results in the emergence of additional points of view that may benefit the organization that would not have surfaced within a more reactive system.

Members of organizations that are more loosely coupled also have a tendency to exhibit a higher locus of control within their sphere of influence (Weick, 1976). The quiet confidence that is exhibited by members of the Conservatory can be directly attributed to this higher locus of control. They are not limited to solely the perspectives of the larger organization, but are encouraged to incorporate their own artistic voices in everything that they do.

The characteristics inherent to the performing arts set the stage for the Conservatory to develop as a loosely coupled organization. Though this type of system retains many of the core principles of systems theory, the paradigm provides several distinct advantages that have allowed the development of the unique organizational strategies identified by this study. If this organization adopted a more reactive system accompanied by more traditional strategies, the culture and the story of the Conservatory would have been remarkably different.

Research Question 4: Attitudes and Beliefs

What attitudes and/or beliefs enable members the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?

Discussion. The Conservatory has been able to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose as a result of several distinct attitudes and beliefs exhibited by members of its community. The first of these two attitudes is that of passion and grit. When participants of this study spoke about their motivations and what enables them to overcome challenges, the overwhelming response was centered upon a passion for the performing arts and the grit to persevere in the face of adversity. The significance of these attitudes being present within the organization is the belief amongst its members that they will eventually prevail even when faced with challenges that appear to limit progress towards their desired goal. This collective spirit is what has enabled the organization to remain committed to a shared vision and purpose as it has matured over the last sixty years.

Complementing the existence of the passion and grit displayed by members of the Conservatory is the presence of appreciation and humility. These elements provide balance to the competitive drive that is often associated with the performing arts. In keeping with the belief that the Conservatory prides itself upon developing well rounded individuals, these two aspects of

humanity serve both as a grounding mechanism and a reminder of the great talent and diversity that is represented throughout the organization.

Links to Theory. Though the strategies implemented by an organization provide the direction towards a shared vision and purpose, it is the attitudes and beliefs exhibited by its members that create the energy needed to take the necessary steps to get there. This study surfaced four that were unique to the journey undertaken by the Conservatory. As these attitudes and beliefs begin to emerge, the path an organization travels in pursuit of a shared vision will become clear. In the case of this study, each of the attitudes and beliefs exhibited by members of the organization aligned with significant elements of the change theories explored within the review of literature.

In the mid 1960s, Point Park College was formed out of a clearly defined vision of becoming an institution of higher education rooted within the liberal arts. It was this transition that established the foundation upon which the Conservatory at Point Park would begin to take shape. These early days exemplified two critical elements related to change within organizations. The first is the development of a clearly defined shared vision. Kotter asserted that a central vision would ultimately provide direction, alignment of action, and inspiration to the organization's community (Kotter, 2007). Senge furthered this idea by noting that these organizational visions should also align with the personal visions existing within members of organization (Senge, 1994; Senge, 1996). As this shared vision begins to take root within an organization, a network of committed individuals will begin to develop. In the case of the Conservatory, this commitment was evidenced by the significant amount of dedication to the idea of growing the presence of the performing arts within the region. These ideas were

ultimately manifested through the relationship with the Pittsburgh Playhouse and the development of both the Department of Theatre and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.

Before this transformation would be able to occur, the leadership of the college needed to guide the organization towards becoming an institution of higher education. As the technical college was founded less than twenty-five years earlier, there remained a strong connection to the academic programs that the technical college was founded upon. As Hall and Hord theorized, change within an organization is a very personal process that relies heavily upon the perspectives of its members. To be successful, the leadership of the young college would have to engage the organization's community and authentically assess their willingness to chart a new course (Hall & Hord, 1987). They accomplished this by developing a vested interest within the organization's community focused upon a new vision of what the organization could become. In doing so, this forward looking focus began to replace the existing culture within the young college. This phase of the transformation has also been described by Lewin as a rejection of past knowledge. Those leading the change within the organization began to discredit the status quo in the hopes that new knowledge and learning opportunities would be created to shift focus towards a desired vision of the future (Lewin, 1974). For Point Park, the opportunities to partner with the Pittsburgh Playhouse and the creation of the Department of Theatre and Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre were the mechanisms used to shift the focus of the organization.

The energy supporting this gradual change within the college was derived from the passion and grit exhibited by members within the organization's community. To the advantage of both Point Park and the Conservatory, members of the performing arts community often exhibit a high level of perseverance towards the pursuit of artistic excellence. This drive and

determination not only began to permeate the young college, but it allowed the Conservatory to overcome many of the early challenges it faced.

As the efforts to close the gap between the vision and reality began to accelerate, a culture that empowered members of the Conservatory's community began to emerge. Though Lewin and Kotter would each formulate their theories separately, they each emphasized the importance of empowering members of the organization with the right resources and opportunity to pursue the shared vision. The leadership at Point Park, where possible, leveled as many of the administrative challenges so that members of the Conservatory could remain focused upon developing the academic and performance aspects of the new department (Kotter, 2007; Kotter 2012). Though many organizations do this relatively well, Lewin's research suggests that it is sometimes difficult for organizations to do this authentically. While organizations do empower their members, they often also attempt to control or predict the direction they will take. Lewin strongly encourages that organizations need to create these opportunities, and trust that their employees will remain aligned within the breadth of a shared vision (Lewin, 1974). With the case of the Conservatory, the leadership at Point Park entrusted the members of the Conservatory to operate within the boundaries of the shared vision while in pursuit of established standards of artistic excellence.

As the Conservatory continued to mature, a second set of attitudes emerged within the organization's culture that is also inherent to the performing arts. The presence of appreciation and humility enabled members of the organization to remain grounded in such a highly competitive and sometimes chaotic environment. These attitudes have also strengthened the many relationships that are formed while navigating the heavy academic and performance demands of its programs. In fact, it these close relationships help form the safe environment that

Kotter feels is necessary to help begin anchoring change within an organization (Kotter, 2012). Recalling that the Conservatory can be defined as a loosely coupled system, significant value is placed upon personal reflection within the organization. It is these reflections that are often shared openly and honestly with other members of the conservatory. Through these experiences, members of the Conservatory take on greater appreciation for the characteristics and perspectives embodied by their peers. It is this appreciation and humility that enhances the willingness of individuals to share their newly acquired perspective and experiences with others in the organization. What results is an ongoing cycle of personal and professional growth that is experienced by members and subsequently shared through learning opportunities among members of the Conservatory's community (Lewin, 1974).

With the continued growth of the Conservatory accelerating through the 1980s and 1990s, the presence of passion, grit, appreciation and humility served as the energizing elements within the organization's culture. Even as the formal structure of the Conservatory took on varying forms, the characteristics of its members and the shared vision they believed in remained consistent. This reaffirms Senge's belief that organizational change must begin with investment within the personal results of an organization's members. He believed that if that is done correctly, then the network of committed individuals and eventually the organizational results would not be far behind (Senge, 1999). Both Kotter and Lewin have expressed similar beliefs within their own research related to organizational change. They each have theorized that a shared vision should be anchored and aligned with the organization's culture. As was evidenced within the Conservatory, the shared vision has remained consistently aligned with the organization's culture over the past sixty years. Because of this, the members of the organization

have been able to remain focused on the pursuit of this vision even as the organization has matured.

Summary of the Study

The Conservatory's journey from an idea to becoming an internationally recognized organization began, and continues to persist, as a result of the presence of twelve human qualities. The qualities of Soul, Authenticity, Vision, Organic, Growth, Humanity, Relationships, Diversity, Passion, Grit, Appreciation and Humility serve as stepping-stones that will illuminate the pathway that an organization will take when leading significant change. That journey, however, must begin with a clearly defined vision that will provide the direction in which the organization must travel.

Just as the performing arts celebrate the many unique artistic voices of those within its community, the shared vision of the Conservatory is comprised of many diverse experiences, cultures, ethnicities and perspectives. As Margaret Wheatley (1993) stated:

If you look moment to moment, you will not see a pattern. You will see what looks like a system out of control because the behavior jumps all over the place. But, if you stand back far enough, if you wait over time, scale or distance, you will observe the order that is in chaos. (p. 4)

The order that emerges from this diversity has created the shared vision of the Conservatory. This vision is actually comprised of the many diverse personal visions that are pursued in a highly orchestrated and purposeful manner guided by ever improving standards of artistic excellence. Just as the organization passionately celebrates its diversity, it also fiercely protects the loosely coupled system upon which their culture is woven. The presence of this

loosely coupled system has not only helped preserve the diversity of the Conservatory, it has safeguarded the clarity of the artistic voices of members of its community.

As many scholars have theorized, organizational change must authentically elicit a vested interest from individual members of the organization. In doing so, there is a tendency to replace the individual's voice with that of a larger systemic voice of the organization. Qualities inherent to the performing arts, such as one's artistic voice and twelve characteristics that have emerged from this study, serve in part as the mechanism to protect this from occurring. Where much of the existing scholarly work typically positions these human characteristics within smaller elements of organizational change, the Conservatory and this study has given them a more visible leading role.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this study was to document a significant change initiative that resulted in the development of an organization and its culture. That journey, spanning greater than sixty years, brought to life the organizational strategies, attitudes and beliefs, and characteristics of members of one particular conservatory and aligned the findings with theories related to organizational change. In doing so, the study has provided the opportunity for the human characteristics of organizational change to take center stage. Though this study has shared several learning moments for its readers, there remain many more yet to be discovered within this unique organization. In the short term, however, there are two distinct avenues of inquiry that would likely contribute immediately to the scholarly work related to organizational change.

The first recommendation is centered within the larger body of scholarly knowledge related to organizational change. It is suggested that additional studies should be conducted to further the exploration of characteristics present within performing arts organizations. More

specifically, how these characteristics align with existing theory related to organizational change. As evidenced through the review of literature, the existing body of scholarly work weaves a common thread of humanity through many of its theories. Yet, there is a limited amount of research that has provided the opportunity for these characteristics to play a lead role within organizational change. The culture within performing arts organizations provides a unique setting to further explore the role these characteristics play within this body of knowledge.

The second recommendation for further research is focused upon institutions of higher education that offer performing arts programs. As the era of accountability continues to permeate higher education, many of these programs are beginning to experience the burden of the administrative oversight that is typically associated with more traditional academic programs. As these organizations face increased pressures to view their culture through the lens of standardized methods of assessment and evaluation, they begin to erode the very characteristics that have made them successful. Further research is needed to explore the organizational journey that other performing arts organizations have taken. In doing so, the challenges and opportunities that they each encountered can be shared within the larger academic community. From this research the conversation can begin to explore how best to further integrate the administrative oversight of performing arts programs within more traditional academic settings.

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Appendix A-Letter of Participation

IUP Letterhead

November 1, 2013

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a study about the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University. You are eligible to participate because of your affiliation with the Conservatory of Performing Arts. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

The purpose of this study is to document the development of an organization and its culture. That journey will be brought to life through the stories of those present with the Conservatory during its period of growth. All participants of this study will be asked to complete a brief initial phone interview and participate in a 50 to 60 minute interview.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the principal investigator, Patrick Mulvihill, via email at tygr@iup.edu or by phone at (412) 392-4784.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the included Informed Consent form and return to the investigator at the following address: Patrick M. Mulvihill, 513 West Penn Hall, Point Park University, 201 Wood Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15222. Keep the extra unsigned copy for your records.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Mulvihill
Doctoral Candidate
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Professional Studies in Education
136 Stouffer Hall
Indiana, PA 15705
(412) 392-4784

Dr. Cathy Kaufman
Professor
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Professional Studies in Education
136 Stouffer Hall
Indiana, PA 15705
(724) 397-3928

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix B-Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: Voices of Change: A Case Study Documenting the Development of an Organization and its Culture.

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR: Patrick M. Mulvihill, Doctoral Candidate, Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Professional Studies in Education; 136 Stouffer Hall, Indiana, PA 15705; (412) 392-4784; tygr@iup.edu.

FACULTY SPONSOR: Dr. Cathy Kaufman, Professor. Indiana University of Pennsylvania; Professional Studies in Education; 136 Stouffer Hall, Indiana, PA 15705; (724) 397-3928.

PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this study is to document the development of an organization and its culture. That journey will be brought to life through the stories of those present with the Conservatory during its period of growth. The collective experience of the study's participants will contribute to current literature relating to organizational development.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no risks associated with the study greater than those encountered in everyday life. The findings of this study may potentially benefit organizations seeking to make changes to their organizational culture or direct further research relating to organizational development.

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS: There are no anticipated costs for participants, nor will any compensation be awarded to them.

CONFIDENTIALITY: If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence. Your response will be considered only in combination with those from other participants. The information obtained in the study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but your identity will be kept strictly confidential. To remain compliant with federal regulations, all data will be retained for at least three years.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at any time by notifying the principal investigator, Patrick Mulvihill, via email at tygr@iup.edu or by phone at (412) 392-4784. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed.

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix B-Informed Consent (Continued)

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: For additional information, or to ask any questions relating to the study, please contact Patrick Mulvihill via email at tygr@iup.edu or by phone at (412) 392-4784.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

On these terms, I certify that I consent to participate in this research project and I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older:

Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Phone number, email, or mailing address where you can be reached. If possible, please include the best days and times to reach you.

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date _____ Investigator's Signature _____

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: 724/357-7730).

Appendix C-Faculty Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your professional experience. In particular, the path which brought you to the Conservatory of Performing Arts?
2. Define your personal vision as it relates to your role within the Conservatory.
3. Describe your perception of the organizational culture of the Conservatory.
4. Describe a pivotal moment that has shaped your attitude(s) and/or belief(s) about the Conservatory's culture.
5. Describe your perception of the organizational vision of the Conservatory.
6. Describe a defining moment that shaped your understanding of the Conservatory's vision.
7. Describe how progress towards the pursuit of the Conservatory's vision is measured.
8. Describe an insurmountable event or moment that occurred in pursuit of the Conservatory's vision.
9. Describe a defining event or moment that resulted in significant progress towards the attainment of the Conservatory's vision.
10. What characteristics best describe students within the Conservatory?
11. What characteristics best describe administrators within the Conservatory?
12. What is your source of motivation?
13. What would you, as a faculty member, like to see changed or modified within the Conservatory?

Appendix D-Student Interview Protocol

1. Describe what attracted you to the Conservatory of Performing Arts.
2. Describe your perception of the Conservatory's programs.
3. Describe a defining event that contributed to your perception of the Conservatory's programs.
4. Define your personal vision as a student within the Conservatory.
5. Describe an insurmountable event or moment that occurred in pursuit of your vision.
6. Describe a defining event or moment that resulted in significant progress towards your personal vision.
7. Describe your perception of the culture of the Conservatory.
8. Describe a defining moment that shaped your attitude(s) and/or belief(s) about the Conservatory's culture.
9. What characteristics best describe your faculty?
10. What characteristics best describe members of the administration?
11. What is your source of motivation?
12. What would you, as a student, like to see changed or modified within the Conservatory?

Appendix E-Administrator Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your professional experience. In particular, the path which brought you to the Conservatory of Performing Arts?
2. Define your personal vision as it relates to your role within the Conservatory.
3. Describe your perception of the organizational culture of the Conservatory.
4. Describe a pivotal moment that has shaped your attitude(s) and/or belief(s) about the Conservatory's culture.
5. Describe your perception of the organizational vision of the Conservatory.
6. Describe a defining moment that shaped your understanding of the Conservatory's vision.
7. Describe how progress towards the pursuit of the Conservatory's vision is measured.
8. Describe an insurmountable event or moment that occurred in pursuit of the Conservatory's vision.
9. Describe a defining event or moment that resulted in significant progress towards the attainment of the Conservatory's vision.
10. What characteristics best describe faculty within the Conservatory?
11. What characteristics best describe students within the Conservatory?
12. What is your source of motivation?
13. What would you, as an administrator, like to see changed or modified within the Conservatory?

Appendix F-Community Member Interview Protocol

1. Describe your connection to the Conservatory at Point Park University.
2. Define your personal vision as it relates to your role within your own organization.
3. Describe your perception of the organizational culture of the Conservatory.
4. Describe a pivotal moment that has shaped your attitude(s) and/or belief(s) about the Conservatory's culture.
5. Describe your perception of the organizational vision of the Conservatory.
6. Describe a defining moment that shaped your understanding of the Conservatory's vision.
7. From your perspective, describe an insurmountable event or moment that the Conservatory encountered in pursuit of their vision.
8. From your perspective, describe a defining event or moment that resulted in significant progress towards the attainment of the Conservatory's vision.
9. What characteristics best describe students within the Conservatory?
10. What characteristics best describe faculty within the Conservatory?
11. What characteristics best describe administrators within the Conservatory?
12. What is your source of motivation?
13. What would you, as a community member, like to see changed or modified within the Conservatory?

Appendix G-Alumni Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about your professional experience. In particular, your journey after graduating from the Conservatory of Performing Arts?
2. Define your personal vision as it relates to your professional career.
3. Describe an insurmountable event or moment that occurred in pursuit of your vision.
4. Describe a defining event or moment that resulted in significant progress towards pursuit of your vision.
5. Describe your perception of the organizational culture of the Conservatory.
6. Describe a pivotal moment that has shaped your attitude(s) and/or belief(s) about the Conservatory's culture.
7. Describe your perception of the organizational vision of the Conservatory.
8. Describe a defining moment that shaped your understanding of the Conservatory's vision.
9. What characteristics best describe faculty within the Conservatory?
10. What characteristics best describe administrators within the Conservatory?
11. What is your source of motivation?
12. What would you, as alumni, like to see changed or modified within the Conservatory?

Appendix H-Research and Interview Questions Alignment

Research Question	Faculty	Student	Administration	Community	Alumni
Is the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University a learning organization? If so, what evidence supports this assertion?	1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12	1, 2, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12
How did the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University infuse meaning, management, and measurement within its culture?	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	2, 5, 6, 7, 8
What organizational strategies enable the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13	3, 5, 7, 8, 12	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13	3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12
What attitudes and/or beliefs enable members the Conservatory of Performing Arts at Point Park University to remain focused upon the pursuit of a shared vision and purpose?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Appendix I-The Road Map for Organization Change

The Learning Organization

Soul
Authenticity

Establish Meaning, Management and Measurement

Vision (Meaning)
Organic (Management)
Growth (Measurement)

Surfacing Organizational Strategies

Humanity
Relationships
Diversity

Illuminating Attitudes and Beliefs

Passion
Grit
Appreciation
Humility